

HAVE YOU MET CHARLIE THE KETTLE? HE'S HERE TODAY!

THE HOTSPUR

EVERY THURSDAY

No. 1005—FEB. 11th, 1956.

PRICE 3d



The PELICAN dates back to Queen Elizabeth I. This ship made a voyage right round the world, under a young officer called Drake, who became the famous admiral, Sir Francis Drake.

SHIPS OF THE LINE

No 4

H.M.S. PELICAN



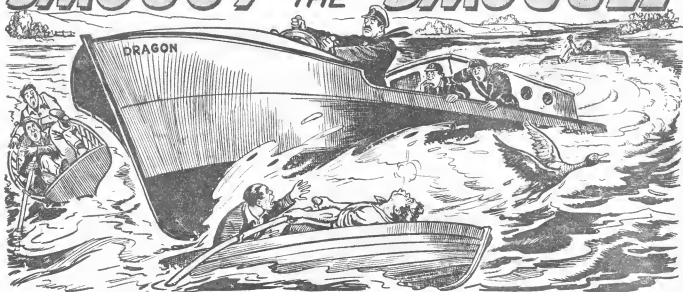
The modern PELICAN is an anti-aircraft frigate of 1790 tons and was launched in 1938. She took part in the first convoy of World War II, in Sept. 1939.

FOR THRILLS
AND ACTION

THE FLAMING FRONTIER

The great Red Circle School yarn with laughs galore for every boy!

SMUGGY ON THE SMUGGLE



Easy For Spiv.

THE cabin cruiser "Dragon" pattered down the River Ling. On a deck chair at the stern reclined Mr Smugg, the tyrant master of Red Circle's Home House.

It was a half-day at Red Circle, and Smugg was enjoying the fresh air. His crew wasn't having such a good time. Only Spiv Ringer, the Home House "wide" boy, seemed to be as comfortable as Smugg.

Spiv was lounging at the wheel, a smirk on his face. Rob Roy Macgregor, Numb Ned Norton, and Jimmy Grange, the other lads in Smugg's crew, were crawling round the decks with scrubbers and polishing rags. They all wore the uniform of bell-bottom trousers and sailor jerseys Smugg had provided.

"I want everything spotless," hooted Smugg. "Remember, it is Regatta Day down at Limgmouth today, and the boat must make a good impression!"

Numb Ned, the Home House lazy lad, rubbed furiously at a handrail.

"Why isn't Spiv given some of the hard work?" he muttered. "He's had all the easy jobs since he came aboard."

Rob Roy, the Homers' captain, glanced at Spiv.

"Spiv must be in Smugg's good books," exclaimed Rob Roy.

Smugg brought his arm round with a sweep to look at his new wrist watch.

"Nearly there," announced Smugg. "Grange, go to my cabin and tidy it up. Dust the portrait, and make sure Pikestaff is all right!"

Jimmy Grange began to walk towards the cabin. He wasn't a Red Circle boy, although he was living at the school. Smugg had hired him to help sail the boat.

"I'll do it, Jimmy!" called Spiv. "You take the wheel for a spell!"

Jimmy looked surprised.

"It gets a bit tricky near the harbour," went on Spiv, hurriedly. "It would be better if you took over the wheel."

"O K," nodded Jimmy.

He took the wheel, and Spiv hurried into the cabin. Closing the door, he gave a sigh of relief.

Facing Spiv on the bulkhead was the painting of a naval officer in eighteenth-century uniform. The label underneath read "Admiral Smugg."

It was this portrait that had started Smuggy off on a life on the ocean wave. Smuggy had

met two yachtsmen named Wickham and Strutt in the nearby seaport of Limgmouth, and he had boasted to them of his naval ancestors. Later, Wickham had presented Smuggy with this portrait of Admiral Smugg.

This proof that he really had got salt in his blood had given Smuggy sea fever. He had started running Home House like a ship, and he had bought the Dragon from Wickham.

Smuggy had press-ganged Rob Roy, Numb Ned, and Spiv to act as his crew. None of the lads knew much about sailing, which was why Jimmy Grange had joined them. Jimmy came from Limgmouth, and he had spent most of his life around boats.

Smuggy went sailing at every opportunity. On this half-day he had taken the boys down to his boat as soon as school was over, and set off on a trip down to Limgmouth.

The news that the Regatta was being held at Limgmouth had cheered up the lads, but Smuggy had soon altered that. He had set his crew to work making the boat spick and span for the occasion. The only one who didn't have to slave was Spiv. For some reason he was getting favoured treatment from Smuggy.

A piercing squawk greeted Spiv.

"Make way for the admiral!"

A large, ornate cage hung in the cabin. Hopping about inside the cage was Pikestaff, the parrot.

The parrot was another gift from Wickham to Smuggy. Wickham had explained that no real sailor could be without a parrot.

Spiv began flicking a duster round the cage. As he polished a projecting knob in the base, Pikestaff gave another shriek.

"Twist it, twist it!"

"Shut up!" muttered Spiv.

Pikestaff stopped squawking as Spiv moved away from the cage. The previous night Spiv had been cleaning the cage, and the parrot had shrieked "Twist it!" Spiv had twisted the knob, and a secret compartment in the base of the cage had opened. Inside Spiv had found ten wristlet watches.

Spiv had no idea where the watches had come from, and he didn't intend to ask any questions. This was a chance to make money. Nine of the watches were in his pocket. The tenth was on Smuggy's wrist.

That was why Spiv didn't want anybody else cleaning the cage.

Meanwhile, Rob Roy and Ned were still cleaning, while Jimmy had the helm. The

river was broadening out into the harbour at Limgmouth, and Jimmy turned in towards the quay.

"I can see Mr Wickham's yacht, sir," he said. "Shall we tie up astern?"

"Very well," nodded Smuggy.

Jimmy had his reasons for wanting to get close to Wickham's yacht. There was some mystery about Smuggy's boat, and it seemed to be linked with Wickham, and also with Jimmy's elder brother, Nobby.

Jimmy stayed with his brother in Limgmouth, but Nobby was away often on business trips. He worked for Wickham, but he would never explain what his job was. Nobby was away at the moment, but Jimmy did not know where.

Recently, Jimmy had got nearer to solving the mystery. He had discovered the identity of a prowler who had sneaked aboard Smuggy's boat on several occasions.

Now, as the boat turned in towards the quay, he studied Wickham's yacht. Like the other boats in the harbour, it was decked with flags. More flags were hung out along the quay. Regatta Day was an important event in Limgmouth.

Jimmy had a glimpse of three men on the deck of the yacht, staring towards Smuggy's boat. They vanished quickly, but Jimmy recognised them all. Wally Wickham and his friend Victor Strutt were there, and with them was Adrian Attwood.

Attwood was the man who had been prowling aboard Smuggy's boat. Smuggy had refused to believe that he was the prowler, but Jimmy was certain that Attwood fitted into the mystery somehow.

Jimmy brought Dragon in astern of the yacht. Rob Roy and Ned had the lines ready, and they moored the boat. Spiv came out of the cabin and joined them. Somewhere a band was playing, and the town seemed full of life. Rob Roy looked expectantly at Smuggy.

"May we go ashore, sir?" he asked.

"The boat is not smart enough yet," snapped Smuggy. "I intend to take part in the grand procession of boats later. You may go when the work is finished!"

"I'd like to go ashore, please, sir," smirked Spiv.

Smuggy hesitated.

"There's plenty of time, sir!" said Spiv, significantly, giving Smuggy's watch a meaning look.

"Very well, Ringer!" grunted Smuggy.

Seadog Smugg is really in trouble this week — he's made to walk the plank!

Spiv grinned at the other lads. Pulling on a jacket over the jersey he was wearing, he stepped jauntily ashore.

Private Franks.

STRUTT, Wickham, and Attwood sat in the cabin of Wickham's yacht. Peering out cautiously through a porthole, Wickham saw Spiv Ringer marching away.

"One of the boys has gone," he said. "But Smuggy's got the others still working." "We'll have to get rid of them," muttered Strutt. "Are you sure it was one of our watches Smugg was wearing, Adrian?"

"Positive!" said Adrian Attwood. Although Smugg didn't know it, the wrist watch he was wearing had been smuggled into the country. Wickham and Strutt were doing the smuggling, and Attwood was the man who distributed the watches they bought.

Nobby, Jimmy Grange's brother, had been acting as the go-between, but the Customs officers had got suspicious of him. Nobby had faded into the background, while Wickham tried to think of some other way of getting the watches through.

Wickham had decided to get Smugg on the smuggle. By faking the picture of Admiral Smugg, he had soon set Smugg enthusiastic about a sailor's life.

Wickham's idea had been to hide watches aboard the Dragon every time Smugg visited Lingmouth. Then, when Smugg returned to Red Circle, Attwood would be waiting to slip aboard and remove the smuggled watches.

The parrot's cage played a part in the scheme. Wickham had hidden watches in the false bottom of the cage, and these were the ones Spiv had found. Not knowing who had really taken the watches, the smugglers suspected that Smugg had discovered them—particularly as Smugg was now wearing one of the watches.

"Wait here," said Wickham. "I'll get rid of the boys."

He hurried on deck, scrambled to the quay, and marched quickly to Smugg's boat. Wickham hailed Smugg cheerfully, and jumped aboard.

"Glad to see you down for the Regatta, Mr Smugg," he smiled. "How's the parrot been behaving?"

"The bird certainly has a remarkable flow of language!" said Smugg.

"A real seafaring parrot," said Wickham. "Do you mind if I have a look at it?"

Wickham walked into the cabin, and Pikestaff gave a screech of welcome. Scratching the parrot's head through the bars, Wickham looked round. The portholes of the cabin were open. Hidden from Smugg and the boys on deck, Wickham flicked back the catch on the cage door.

Old Pikestaff's in good shape," he smiled, going back on deck. "Well, see you in the parade of boats later, Mr Smugg. Will you be wearing fancy dress?"

"It hadn't occurred to me," said Smugg. "But my boat will be there."

"Good!" said Wickham. "I'll look out for you."

Wickham jumped back on the quay, and hurried along to his yacht. Strutt and Attwood were waiting for him, and they peered out through the cabin porthole.

"Look!" grinned Wickham. "Pikestaff's back!"

The parrot had appeared at one of the cabin scuttles on Smugg's boat. With a squawk, Pikestaff spread its wings and fluttered along the quay.

Smugg gave a yell when he saw the bird. "The parrot's escaped!" he shouted to Rob Roy and the others.

Jimmy and the Red Circle lads stared as the bird disappeared between buildings on the quay. Then they dropped their scrubbers and jumped ashore. Wickham grinned as the three boys rushed away.

"I guessed the parrot wouldn't do any running!" said Wickham. "Get those things out!"

Strutt opened a chest and pulled out clothes. Quickly the three smugglers changed. Then they looked at one another and burst out laughing. They were all dressed in fancy dress as pirates.

"This'll shake Smuggy!" chuckled Wickham, buckling on a cutlass. "We'll teach him to pinch our watches!"

The other two laughed. They all regarded their smuggling as a game, a battle of wits between them and the Customs. It seemed

SHIPS OF THE LINE



No. 4—H.M.S. PELICAN.

The first Pelican, under the command of Francis Drake, was one of five ships which left England in November, 1577, on a trip to Alexandria. This destination was deliberately false, for the small fleet was off on a raid on the Spanish possessions and shipping on the Pacific coast of South America. The Pelican alone carried out this task. She did not return to England until September, 1580, having sailed completely round the world. She brought back a cargo of gold, silver, jewels and other valuables worth several million pounds!

During her successful voyage the Pelican was renamed the Golden Hind, although another ship christened Pelican, in honour, fought against the Armada in 1588. After her return, the Pelican, now named Golden Hind, was on exhibition in dry dock in London for nearly a hundred years. She was about 70 feet long, and had a beam of 22 feet. Gross tonnage was around 120 tons, and she carried a crew of 56. Only two of her crew were lost throughout her long, amazing voyage!

The modern Pelican is an anti-aircraft frigate of 1790 tons. She was built by Thornycroft and launched in 1938. Twice in five years of war service she lost her stern. Length is 221 ft., beam 37 ft., and her engines, generating 3600 h.p., drive her along at 19 knots. Her armament is six 4-inch guns, four 2-pounder pom-poms, and four 40 mm. anti-aircraft guns. Pelican's complement is 188, and she has the distinction of holding the largest, and the smallest, silver trophies in the Royal Navy. One is 2 feet high, and the other is less than 3 inches!

to them that Smugg had pulled a fast one, so now it was their move.

Carefully, the pirates put black masks over the upper part of their faces.

"Come on!" grinned Wickham. "There will be a lot of people in fancy dress for the Regatta. We won't look out of place."

Boldly the "pirates" strode along to Smugg's boat. Smugg had gone into the cabin to try to find out how Pikestaff had escaped from its cage. He came back on deck as he heard people jumping aboard. His jaw sagged when he saw the three masked pirates. One of them had a long plank.

"Who are you?" spluttered Smugg.

"Cast off!" ordered Wickham, in a gruff, assumed voice.

"This is my boat!" snapped Smugg.

"You have no right to—" "You want to join in the fun of the Regatta, don't you?" interrupted Wickham, wagging his cutlass at Smugg.

Attwood and Strutt cast off. Wickham started the engine, and the boat chugged out into the harbour.

"The water's deep enough here," Wickham remarked, throttling back the engine.

"Deep enough?" exclaimed Smugg. His eyes bulged. The pirates were pushing out over the side the plank they had brought with them.

"What are you doing?" spluttered Smugg.

"That's for you!" chuckled Wickham, behind his mask. "On to the plank!"

Smugg gave a yelp as a cutlass flicked under his nose. He backed away, and the pirates followed. Another cutlass prodded him, and he scrambled on to the end of the plank.

"An old pirate custom!" said Wickham, with a sinister chuckle. "Walking the plank. Tell us what we want to know, or else you feed the sharks!"

Smugg looked round wildly. The harbour was full of boats. He gave a yell and waved his arms.

"Help! Murder!"

Several people on other boats were looking in their direction. They laughed and waved back. They thought this was a comic turn put on as part of the Regatta.

"Talk!" said Wickham.

"What do you want to know?" spluttered Smugg, swaying on the plank.

"That watch!" said Wickham, pointing with his cutlass. "Where did you get it?"

"My watch?" exclaimed Smugg. "What interest can that have—" He ended with a yelp as Wickham's cutlass prodded him.

"It was a present!" he spluttered. "Ringer, a boy in my House, gave it to me!"

"Ringer?" exclaimed Wickham. "Where did he get it?"

"He said his father had sent it to show his appreciation of the way I have been improving young Ringer's education," gasped Smugg.

The pirates looked at one another.

"Do you think the story's true?" muttered Attwood.

"Yes," nodded Wickham. "That explains why we saw Ringer getting favourable treatment while the other lads worked!"

Strutt and Attwood got hold of Smugg by the scruff of the neck, and hauled him aboard.

"Now you're going to be locked in the cabin until we've gone!" said Wickham. "But first I'll have that watch!"

Pikestaff Pops Up.

NUMB NED leaned back against a wall and mopped his brow.

"There's no sign of the blooming bird!" he panted.

Rob Roy and Jimmy halted. The three boys had gone racing into the town after the pelican.

"I'll go back to the harbour," said Jimmy. "Pikestaff used to belong to Mr Wickham. It might make its way round to Mr Wickham's yacht eventually."

"It's an idea," agreed Rob Roy. "Try it, Jimmy. Ned and I will continue the search round here."

The three of them had halted on a street corner. Jimmy was about to turn away when he stopped. Peeling down the side street was Spiv Ringer.

Galloping up, Spiv caught sight of the other lads. Without a word he swerved past them, skidded round a corner, and disappeared from sight.

"What's up with Spiv?" exclaimed Ned. "He's probably been caught trying another swindle!"

"Looks as if he's outdistanced the opposition, anyway," he turned away. "Come on, Ned, let's look for Pikestaff."

Leaving the other two, Jimmy walked back towards the quay.

Wickham's yacht still lay at its moorings, but Smugg's boat had disappeared. Jimmy pained, staring at the empty berth.

"Where's Smuggy?" he muttered. "He couldn't take the heat out by himself."

A squawk interrupted his thoughts. Jimmy looked up. Pikestaff was fluttering along the quay towards him. The bird swung round, and landed on the deck of Wickham's yacht.

"I'll look for Smuggy later," Jimmy decided. "The first thing is to capture Pikestaff!"

The yacht seemed deserted. Jimmy climbed quietly aboard. Pikestaff cocked an eye at him, and flew through an open deck light into the cabin below.

Jimmy raced on to the yacht and dived into the cabin.

Pikestaff was perched on the edge of a bunk. The bunk curtains were drawn shut. As Jimmy made another grab, the parrot hopped back out of sight between the curtains.

Jimmy pulled the curtains back. Then he stopped in surprise. Pikestaff was perched on the bunk. Sharing it with the parrot was Spiv Ringer!

Smugglers All.

"SPIV!" exclaimed Jimmy. "What are you doing here?"

"Smuggy's boat was missing when I got

"I gave Smuggy one of the watches," groaned Spiv.

"So that's why you were in his good books!" exclaimed Jimmy. "I've got to get it back," said Spiv. "I'll hide all the watches in the cage again. What beats me is how they got there in the first place."

"I think I know," said Jimmy slowly. "This explains a lot! Wickham gives the parrot to Smuggy, then that night Wickham's pal Attwood tries to sneak aboard the boat. So that's what he was after—those watches!" There was the noise of a marine engine somewhere astern. It died away as a boat bumped against the quay. There was a pause, then boots clumped on the deck of the yacht.

Wickham and his pals are coming back!" muttered Jimmy. Pikestaff was still perched on the bunk. Jimmy suddenly flung a sheet over the bird, and scooped it up to muffle its squawks. "Draw the curtains!" Jimmy ordered.

Spiv pulled the bunk curtains shut again. Under the sheet, Pikestaff heaved and struggled.

"Give me a hand to keep the parrot quiet!" panted Jimmy.

With the sheet wrapped firmly round Pikestaff again, Jimmy led the way on deck. After him came Spiv, and then the three smugglers.

They all scrambled ashore, and waited to where Smuggy's boat was moored again. From the cabin of the boat came a steady banging.

Wickham motioned the two boys aboard. He followed, and unlocked the cabin door. Smuggy came bursting out.

"Pirates!" he panted. "I have been attacked and robbed!"

"Let's discuss it quietly!" smiled Wickham. "First of all, here's your parcel!" Smuggy goggled as Wickham pushed him back into the cabin.

"You don't understand!" he spluttered. "Put Pikestaff in his cage, Jimmy!"

Jimmy shoved Pikestaff into the open cage, and closed the door.

"I insist on seeing the police!" snapped Smuggy. "A valuable watch has been stolen from me."

"This watch?" said Wickham, blandly, dangling it in front of Smuggy.

"What?" gasped Smuggy. "Where did you get it?"



The pirates were smugglers in disguise and they were giving Smuggy the nautical "third degree."

to the quay," stammered Spiv. "This was the only place I could find to hide."

"Hide?" said Jimmy. "Who from?"

Spiv hesitated.

"The Customs officers are after me," he muttered.

"What?" said Jimmy.

Spiv pulled a handful of watches from his pocket.

"I just tried to sell one of these watches in a jeweller's shop in the town," he explained. "The jeweller kept me waiting, and it made me suspicious. I heard him talking on the phone at the back of the shop."

"Was that why you were running in the town?" asked Jimmy.

"That's right," nodded Spiv. "The jeweller was ringing up the Customs. Apparently he'd had a circular from them giving a description of the sort of watch that's being smuggled into the country. So I grabbed the watch and ran for it."

"Where did you get the watches?" asked Jimmy.

"In a secret compartment in the parrot's cage," gulped Spiv. "But I didn't know the watches were smuggled. You've got to help me, Jimmy."

"There's nothing to link you with Red Circle in those bell-bottoms," said Jimmy. "And if you had your jacket buttoned all the time, the jeweller wouldn't be able to read the boat's name on your jersey."

The two boys clutched the heaving sheet. Hidden behind the bunk curtains, they heard footsteps coming into the cabin.

"Poor old Smuggy!" chuckled Wickham's voice. "When we've changed we'll go along and let him out of his cabin!"

Jimmy took one hand off the sheet long enough to pull the curtain back a little. He had a glimpse of the three men changing out of their fancy dress.

Pikestaff heaved suddenly. It got its head free, and its nut-cracking beak nipped hard. Spiv gave a loud yell as the beak closed on one of his fingers. There was a startled silence in the cabin. Then the curtain was whipped back. Wickham's surprised expression gave way to a smile.

"Look who's here!" he said, gazing at Spiv. "Just the fellow we wanted!"

"I didn't know they were smuggled!" babbled Spiv. "It's not my fault!"

"I'd like those watches back, please!" said Wickham, politely.

"Don't give them to him, Spiv!" exclaimed Jimmy. "These are my fellows really responsible for the smuggling! And that's what we'll tell the Customs!"

"That would get Nobby into trouble!" said Wickham.

Jimmy stared at him. He had forgotten his brother's connection with Wickham.

"We're all in this together," smiled Wickham. "Let's all go and talk it over with Mr Smuggy."

"The Customs officers would be interested to hear you've been caught with a smuggled watch, old chap!" said Wickham.

"Smuggled?" stammered Smuggy.

"There's a wicked lot of smugglers at work here in Lybia," said Wickham solemnly. "Us?"

"You?" gulped Smuggy.

"You're a member of the gang, too," smiled Wickham.

"What?" gasped Smuggy.

"We're all in this together!" beamed Wickham. "Spiv here has tried to sell smuggled watches to the Customs because his brother's in the gang, and Smuggy, because your boat's been carrying Pikestaff!"

"This is fantastic!" muttered Smuggy, weakly.

"I wish I'd ever sold my conscience before!" said Wickham fervently. "I can see we'll make a good team. Victor Strutt and I will bring the watches into the country. You and the boys, Smuggy, will carry them upriver to Red Circle, where Adrian Attwood will receive them for distribution!"

Smuggy gazed at him, his jaw sagging. Wally Wickham rubbed his hands together in a jovial fashion.

"I can see a happy and prosperous future in front of us all!" he beamed.

Will Smuggy and the lads have to help the smugglers? Look out for surprises—and laughs—in NEXT THURSDAY'S super yarn.

WORLD'S TOUGHEST HORSE TRIAL!



Major Weldon on 'Kilbarry' wins fierce 3-day contest

For sheer out-and-out toughness, the European Horse Championship takes a lot of beating. Open to all comers, this formidable competition lasts 3 gruelling days. Every aspect of horsemanship is put to the trial. Each rider takes his horse through test after test of obedience and good manners. Covers 22 miles of country bristling with obstacles. And, at the end of it all, undergoes tremendously stiff trials of jumping and general fitness. Leading the British team to victory this year was Major Frank Weldon, brilliant horseman and regular army officer.

Fame Almost Overnight

Frank Weldon's rise to fame has been dramatic. A few years ago he was an unknown rider. Today he is one of the world's crack horsemen. A member of the victorious British team three times running, he has captained it twice and this year at Windsor won the highest single honour — the individual European championship! The Queen herself presented him with this trophy. Besides his other riding activities, he still races and steeplechases regularly.

Exciting Life The European championships event is not the first time Major Weldon, M.V.O., M.B.E., M.C., has been in the limelight. Not by a long chalk. If you saw the Coronation you must have seen him too. For he was in charge of the Horse Artillery — the King's Troop — that led the military procession. The Army, in fact, has been his career since 1934. Since then he has had a life crammed with adventure. Bags of fun and travel. Plenty of exciting jobs. Masses of thrilling times. During the war, for instance, he escaped several times from prison camps, ended up at the famous fortress of Colditz. (Did you see the film 'The Colditz Story'?)

Real Man's Stuff Life with the regular army today attracts a great many men like Frank Weldon, both as officers and in the ranks. And no wonder. It's a good life. It's an interesting life. It's a life for a *real* man. Nothing offers him such a variety of things as the army does. Unsurpassed chances for sport and travel and adventure. Good long holidays. Much better pay than you'd imagine (no forking out for board and lodging either). And, did you realize that there are over 200 different jobs going in the army today? If you'd like to know more, simply write, stating your age, to the War Office (M.P.6/HR 1103), London, S.W.1, for an illustrated book.

**IT'S A REAL MAN'S LIFE
IN THE REGULAR ARMY**

A blind man on the terrible trail to the Northern goldfields



Murder In The Night.

DAVE McGRAW sat up with sleep clouding his brain. He was conscious that Snowy, his husky dog, was tugging at his sleeve, and that a cry of some kind had wakened him. He was huddled, along with his supplies and his partner, Sourdough Harding, under a tarpaulin at the top of the Chilkoot Pass.

McGraw, well over six feet tall, was on his way to Dawson, the centre of the Klondike gold rush. There he would seek out Jed Jensen, the wealthiest man in the Klondike.

Jensen had started to amass his fortune ten years earlier by robbing the widow of McGraw's best friend of all her money. The woman died of the shock, and McGraw had her young son put into the care of a Vancouver family.

Then the big man went to look for Jensen, intending to get the money back for the youngster. But McGraw was attacked and beaten up by a mob of rufians hired by the swindler.

The injuries McGraw received left him totally blind, but during the next ten years he taught himself to do practically everything despite this handicap.

Then he set out for the Klondike to search for Jensen. On the boat to Skagway he had had several adventures, including a scuffle with a gambler named Lacoste. McGraw and his partner were sleeping after toiling up the notorious Chilkoot Pass with their stores when he was awakened.

McGraw remained perfectly still, straining his ears. About him nobody moved, although it seemed that in the distance he heard the patter of running feet. But that could have been a trick of the wind.

Snowy was beginning to whine and tug. The husky was dragging McGraw in the direction of Sourdough Harding.

"What is it, Snowy?" whispered McGraw.

"What's wrong?"

To his surprise, Snowy let go his arm and gave vent to a long, high-pitched howl, the howl that a husky gives only in the presence of death.

Someone nearby called sleepily to "shut up that row." McGraw groped for his partner.

"Sourdough! Sourdough, are you O.K.?"

Sourdough Harding did not stir. McGraw moved nearer, and shook him. There was still no response. He ran his hands over the silent form, and then he knew why Sourdough did not reply. There was something warm and sticky on his mackinaw front, and a knife projected from his chest.

Sourdough! McGraw bent low and listened at the parted lips. He felt for a pulse, then tore open the shirt front.

His friend was dead. He had been stabbed to death in his sleep. The killer must have crept under the tarpaulin in the darkness, and because the wind had been from the other side, the dog had not scented him.

Dave McGraw rolled from under the tarpaulin and came to his feet. He started to shout:

"Help! Murder! Get up there! My partner's been murdered!"

The men nearest stirred and got up. In no time a score or more crowded round McGraw, some of them with lanterns, some with burning brands.

"Who did it?" gasped a big, burly man.

"Right through the heart. Who did it?"

"Do you think I'd be standing here if I knew?" said McGraw, harshly. "Some swine did it in the dark. How did he know it was Sourdough?"

He stopped suddenly, for he had just realised that maybe the killer had not known who his victim was. The killer may have come to kill him, McGraw, and made a mistake in the dark. So far as McGraw knew, Sourdough had not an enemy in the world. He clenched his hands. He was thinking of Lacoste. The gambler had passed that way, and had known that Sourdough and McGraw were coming. Could he have bribed anyone to look out for the pair and to slay McGraw? It seemed possible.

Brushing aside those who were still peering at the dead man, McGraw knelt down, he grasped the haft of the knife with a handkerchief and slowly pulled it out. Then, to

the surprise of everyone, he sniffed the bone handle, and held it out to his husky.

"Let's look at it," said someone.

Without a word, the blind giant handed it over. What they would tell from its appearance he did not know, but he knew that he had found a clue, a faint smell of oil, the sort of oil that the Kaskin packers used on their bodies.

"Looks like an injun knife," someone was saying. "I've seen knives like this at the stores, and . . ."

"Come on, Snowy!" McGraw whispered to the dog, looping the handkerchief through the collar. "Seek!"

The husky at once started nosing round on the ground between the dead man and the edge of the tarpaulin. McGraw pushed aside those who got in their way, and they stared at him wonderingly. When the dog started off briskly to the right, tugging hard at its master, some of the men shrugged their shoulders.

"He's too shaken to know what he's doing!"

Disregarding their remarks, the blind man followed the dog.

Straight across the plateau it tugged its hurrying master, and McGraw's nostrils detected woodsmoke, and the smell of the body oil became so strong that he knew he had stumbled on several Redskins.

He clucked Snowy and waited, using his ears and sense of smell to tell him more. There was a camp-fire, low at the moment, and round it slept a score of more men. McGraw did not need his eyes to tell him they were the Indian packers who had arrived with loads that night. Wrapped in their blankets, they were sprawled around the fire. Many of them were snoring.

The Killer.

DAVE McGRAW nodded to himself, and went softly forward. He suddenly felt Snowy go tense, and was ready to follow when the dog sprang. The husky pulled him forward towards a blankets-and-negro that now tried to rise to its feet. Snowy evidently had a hold on one of the man's limbs with its powerful teeth, for there was a grunt of pain before Dave McGraw cast his powerful arms about the man's neck and crushed the man's elbows to his sides.

The giant rose, then the struggling Indian with him. The rest of the sleepers scrambled up and saw Snowy with them dropping hands to their hips. McGraw sensed their anger, and his Snowy growl.

"I want only this man," he said, loudly.

"What is his name?"

"White Ear, but . . . you want with him?" demanded one of the Indians, who the prisoner vainly tried to tear himself loose.

"He has killed my partner, and I believe he means to kill me."

Amongst the Indians there was an excited jabbering in their own tongue. White Ear joined in vehemently. Finally the man who had spoken before spoke sharply.

"He says he has killed nobody, and that he has been asked to more than that."

"With his foot to the fire . . ."

"With his feet to the fire."

"Then look at the soles of his moccasins,"

The murderer who was tried in mid-air—over a thousand-foot precipice!

snapped McGraw, lifting the man higher so that his feet swung forward. "How did you get covered with wet mud if they have been next to the fire for more than an hour?"

There was silence, but although he could not see himself, McGraw knew that he was right.

By that time a number of the white men had followed McGraw.

The Indian packers, seeing that the evidence was against their comrade, and that they were greatly outnumbered, tell back in sudden silence.

Dave McGraw shook the prisoner. "Why did you do it? Why did you kill my partner? What did you have against him?" he demanded.

White Ear said nothing. More and more men pressed round, asking how he knew the Indian was the killer.

"I know!" was the stubborn reply. "His moccasins betrayed him, and where is his knife? Why does he not carry a knife like the others? I will tell you. Because he left it in my partner's heart. . . . Now I'm going to get the truth out of him."

"Who paid you to do it?" pursued McGraw, turning his face towards the trembling Redskins. "Was it a white man?"

"Huh!" That grunt might have meant anything. "What Gray know nothing."

McGraw turned, still carrying the Redskins, and swung to the left. The crowd followed him as he headed for the top of a high, rocky cliff. They did not know that McGraw was concentrating to judge exactly how many steps he could take before he went over the edge.

Snowy, believing its master was going to walk to his doom, dashed in front of him, stood on the edge, and growled.

That was just what McGraw wanted. He walked boldly up to the dog, no more than eighteen inches from the brink, and then, with a thrust of one mighty arm, pushed the terrified Redskins out over the edge of the cliff and held him there.

"Answer my questions, or I'll send you to your Happy Hunting Ground!" he roared. "Was it a white man who paid you to knife my partner?"

"No!" came from the terrified packer. "Did a white man pay you to knife me?"

"Uh-huh!" admitted the man.

"What was the white man's name?" persisted the blind giant.

"White Ear! Not know name," protested the prisoner. "He was very pale man, with black hair, and he walked like a sick man."

McGraw nodded and set White Ear back on his feet. The blind giant turned around.

"You were only a fool. I'll punish the one who used you," he growled, and left fly his his clenched fist at the spot where he knew the copper-coloured face to be.

The blow landed square on the Indian's forehead, and he staggered backwards, and his head hit the ground. The blind man coolly stepped over him, whistled his dog to his side, and gripped it by the collar, knowing that it would guide him back to the spot where they were camped.

Some of the gold-brushers ran after McGraw to ask if he knew the man the Indian had described.

"So do those of you who travelled north on the Umatilla," growled the blind man, naming the ship on which he had sailed from Vancouver to Skagway. "It was Slim Lancaster, the cousin of Mr. Jensen, and I'll deal with him when we get to Dawson."

McGraw returned to the place where his dead partner lay, emptied Sourdough's pockets of anything the man's family might like to have, then wrapped the already cold body in a blanket and carried it some distance from the camp. Presumably those who were still awake heard the thud of a pick and the clank of a spade as McGraw dug a grave in the frozen ground.

By dawn McGraw had decided what to do. He needed a companion, if not a full partner.

He could not carry the stores the twenty-five miles to Lake Lindeman, sail across the lake, and run the hundreds of miles down the Yukon single-handed. He remembered that about the Umatilla, and again on the Dyea Beach at Skagway, he had encountered a clever little man named Dick Melville.

Melville had been a sailor, and had come north without the necessary cash or room for foodstuffs. He would be turned back at the Yukon border unless he had both by the time he reached it. He was now hiring himself out as a packer on the deadly Chilkoot Pass, each day staggering to the top with a full load, being paid at the rate of forty cents per pound. If he had not worked himself literally to death before he had raised a thousand dollars, he might get through to Dawson before the freeze-up.

Several times McGraw had spoken to him on the Chilkoot Pass, and had admired his indomitable spirit. At the moment the ex-sailor would be sleeping at the foot of the pass, waiting to climb with another load.

"I'll wait for him," decided the blind giant, and he started to bid himself some coffee and make flap-jacks.

It was the first day's rest he had had for many a day, and he occupied part of it by scribbling a letter to Sourdough's family. Writing came easy to him even though he could not see the paper, and he finally placed the letter inside a parcel with Sourdough's belongings, labelled the package, and paid a returning miner to post it in Skagway.

McGraw's New Partner.

McGraw heard Dick Melville just before dawn that night. He had waited at the top of the trail as the packers struggled to the top. Melville was the only one amongst them who sounded cheerful, McGraw waited until the ex-sailor had put down his load, and then he approached him.

Melville, you want to get to Dawson before the freeze-up? Maybe I can help you."

He could hear the little man shake his head. "I hope to get through, but I can't start for at least another month."

"That will be too late. You'll be caught in the freeze-up. Sourdough Harding, my partner, was murdered last night, so now I'm needing a new partner. I've sufficient grub and cash for two. What about teaming along with me?"

He could not see, but Melville's face puckered and turned scarlet. Out shot the little sailor's hand, and the faint rustle of his sleeve guided McGraw's hand to meet it.

"I'll go with you, McGraw. I'll repay you when we get up to the goldfields. While I hit gold, you'll get the first 1000 dollars I make, and a good bit more!"

"Repay me when you like, but in the meantime we've got to get to Dawson!" McGraw said to hump this lot twenty-five miles to Lake Lindeman for a start.

Melville's face wreathed in smiles. "There's one way in which I can help you. To carry all your stuff on our backs would take a fortnight or more. With a sled, we could make it in four trips, and the timber on the edge could be used to make a flat-bottomed sled to take up as much stuff as we like."

"Yes, we've all the tools you want, but no timber. It would cost nearly all the money I possess to buy enough timber here to make a sled the size we need."

Dick Melville clicked his tongue, a habit he had while he was pleased.

"I can provide the timber. A week ago I carried up many loads of stuff for a man who's going to build a store on the other side of the lake. He hadn't enough cash to pay me off, and asked me to choose from his goods. I chose timber, and I've cached it not far from the edge bushes."

That evening, Melville moved his small pile of possessions over to the blind man's dump. McGraw hesitated as to whether he ought to tell his new partner about his blindness, but in the end he resolved to keep his

secret. Sourdough had never suspected the truth, and there was no reason why the ex-sailor should do so.

But the big man nearly gave himself away the first morning. Usually he knew the way by instinct, but for once this left him down. He got up much too early, and Melville awakened him, and he was sorting out the tools they would need, in total darkness.

The man's eyes opened wide. "How do you do it?" he gasped. "I couldn't tell a screwdriver from a chisel in this darkness, and as for sorting nails. . . . It's uncanny. Do you mean to say you can see in the dark just as well as in daylight?"

"Just as well. It makes no difference to me." Was the truthful reply. "Sorry I awakened you so soon, I'll get the spirit stove going and make some coffee."

He tried to light the stove, but the match broke in two, the top half dropping to the ground. As matches were practically unobtainable, McGraw stooped and retrieved what he had dropped, using it to light the stove as intended. Dick Melville's eyes bulged.

Breakfast over, he led McGraw to his cache of wood. By helping to lift it, and so handling it, the blind giant got good idea of just how much there was, and as good there was sufficient for their purpose.

The two men set to work to make a sled, which would carry about a quarter of their total load.

It took a whole day to fashion the sled, and that night McGraw looked up in darkness to save time in the morning.

Soon after dawn they left Snowy on guard, and took the two tow ropes over their shoulders. They heaved with all their weight to get the sled started, and were satisfied that it would go.

They made about two miles an hour where the going was smooth, and less when they had to keep stopping to clear away boulders or lift the sled over holes and ruts. Melville marvelled at the amazing strength of his partner.

All along the trail to the lake they came upon staggering groups of men who were carrying their belongings in the same direction. The others marvelled that two men could haul so big a sled at such a steady pace.

Every man was driving himself to the limit, urged on by the distant lure of the yellow metal which they expected to find in great quantities. They were working as they had never worked before, suffering as they had never expected to suffer, not sparing any effort to carry them forward, for all was haunted by the fear of being caught by the freeze-up before they could reach Dawson.

Dave McGraw and his partner got their first load to the lakeside before nightfall, and found hundreds of men there trying to make or hire boats. Once again, fantastic prices were being demanded for timber.

They had a sack of cash for their stores, and slept that night beside them, starting back the next morning for the top of the Chilkoot Pass with the empty sled.

On this return journey they met a procession of eighty Indians laden down with crates, bales and furniture.

It must have cost a fortune to get those loads up the Chilkoot Pass alone. There was a small, dark man in charge, muffled in furs, and with a long cigar between his teeth. When they asked him where he was bound, and who all that stuff was for, he announced:

"We're bound for Dawson City. These are the fittings for Del Jensen's new saloon. It's going to be the biggest and finest in the Klondike!"

Dick Melville wondered why his partner's expression changed at that, and why McGraw did not speak for the next two miles.

The next obstacle McGraw has to face is the deadly White Horse Rapids! How will he, a blind man, combat this?

THE RAILWAY COP WITH A UNIFORM OF HIS OWN — A SERGE SUIT, A CLAY PIPE
AND A BOWLER HAT!

DANNY DIXON'S LAZY, CRAZY RAILWAY



The Private Train.

A WHEEZY, dust-covered jeep rattled in from the desert road and jerked to a halt outside the little white-walled railway station of El Kafa. Out of it jumped a stocky man in a blue serge suit.

He had a clay pipe clamped between his jaws and a bowler hat stuck on the back of his head. He was Danny Dixon, the engineer from Clydeside, who was now unofficial superintendent of the shining new railroad that stretched across the sun-baked desert of the small Arab state of Azakand.

"This is where the hold-up is," muttered Danny, shading his eyes from the sun and gazing towards a siding where several brand new locomotives were at a standstill. "Those trains should have left here an hour ago. I'll shake somebody up for this!"

Sitting in the jeep was a cheery-looking, dark-skinned youngster with a red fez perched on his fuzzy head. He was Hassan, the son of the Emir of Azakand. The Emir had sent him along to work with Danny so that he could learn how the railroad operated.

Danny's job was to make sure the trains ran to time. The new railroad had been built by the Star Oil Company, Danny's employers. In return for oil concessions, the Emir had a contract which stated that a fixed number of trains had to run over the line during the first three months. If the trains failed to run, the Emir wouldn't have to pay the cost of the railroad out of the money he made on the oil deal.

The Emir had been anxious to have the railroad in his country, but he wasn't particularly anxious to pay for it. Therefore, he did little to help in its efficient running. And since Azakand was full of wandering Bedouins who were always pinching the railway sleepers for firewood, robber sheiks who held up the trains just when they felt like it, and sandstorms and other troubles, Danny was finding that keeping the trains running to time was a full-time job.

"Where's the stationmaster?" roared Danny, striding on to the platform, where several would-be passengers squatted in the shade.

Some of the Arabs had camels or donkeys, and huge bundles of luggage. All of them they would cram into the next train. A camel meant pulled a floor out

"I, lord, am the stationmaster," announced a portly Arab, waddling out of the ticket office and bowing deeply at the sight of Danny's bowler hat.

Danny's bowler was known from one end of the railroad to the other. All the Arabs regarded it with deep awe and respect.

"What are those trains waiting over there for?" demanded Danny, pointing towards the siding. "Why have they been stopped here?"

"The trains mustn't move when the red signal is against them. That is written in the book of regulations," beamed the stationmaster.

"Who set the signals against them?" "I did," explained the stationmaster cheerfully.

"Why?" roared Danny. "Those trains should have left here an hour ago. What's the idea of stopping them?"

"In the book of regulations it is written that no trains may move from El Kafa until the main line is clear."

"But the line is clear," snorted Danny. "It's been clear all the morning. There's no other train to come through until late this evening."

"That is what it says on the tables of time, Bowler Engineer," said the stationmaster good-humoredly. "But there is another train on the line."

"There can't be," argued Danny. "By gum, I ought to know how the line runs."

He suddenly broke off. From the line came a loud rumbling and noise, punctuated by the frenzied shriek of a whistle. Danny gaped unbelievably.

Indoubtedly a train was coming along the line. But it was not one of the sleek, new Diesel-driven trains provided by the oil company. It looked like something that had been dug out of a museum. It had a great tall chimney, belching black smoke, and it was oozing steam in all directions.

"Suffering crows!" Danny stuttered. "Where did that come from?"

Shouting and puffing and wheezing and rattling, the ancient engine clattered through the station. It was a three ancient, open coaches loaded with Arabs. Seated in the coaches were men in white thobes and ghutras, some with

"That," murmured Hassan to the giggling Danny, "is Sheik Sarkk. He is one of the most powerful sheiks in our country."

"I don't care a fig who he is," gasped Danny, gazing jeeringly after the train as it went puffing and wheezing its way down the track. "Where did that heap of scrap-iron come from, and what want to know? How did it get so close to a sleep in the hazards that the book promises?"

"I have heard that the Emir was to be built, he decided he would have his own private train. He bought the engine during his travels abroad, and had it sent to Azakand by ship. He is using the train for taking his family and servants on trips to the seaside."

"Trips to the seaside!" howled Danny, stunned. "He's got to be stopped!"

"Perhaps the Bowler Elendi did not notice," put in the stationmaster tactfully, "but the sheik had many men with rifles on his train. To try to stop him would be most unwise."

Danny clamped his pipe between his jaws and snorted.

"Unwise or not, we can't have perishing sheiks running their own private excursions to the seaside on this railway," he declared. "That second-hand Puffing Billy is going back to the scrap-yard it came from!"

Fast-Shooting Sheik.

WITH Danny at the wheel, holding on to his bowler hat with one hand and with the other, the jeep roared along the road by the railway track. It was Sheik Sarkk's ancient engine, which was puffing and wheezing merrily, and finally shot past a signal-box at the next station.

Danny stepped into the steps into the signal-box and saw Hassan. The Arab signalman was sitting on the floor, resting his back against the wall and smoking peacefully.

"Hey, wake up!" Danny, shaking him. "There's a train coming down the line. I want it stopped."

The signalman blinked through the windows.

"But that is the train of Sheik Sarkk," he said. "No one may stop a train of Sheik Sarkk. It would hang me from the

A "Puffing Billy" stops all Danny's modern Diesel trains from running!

"If you're too scared to stop it, I'll do it myself," rapped Danny, and he yanked the lever over.

The signal along the line changed to "stop." The sheik's ancient train had almost reached it by this time and the whistle shrieked wildly as the driver saw the signal. But the train didn't stop.

With black smoke belching and steam hissing, the engine whacked up a bit more speed. The Arabs in the sheik's coach raised their rifles. There was a crackle of gunfire as they shot the signal to pieces. Then Sheik Razik's private train roared triumphantly on its way.

Danny glared after the train.

"I'll have that Sheik Razik locked up for trespassing on the railroad and damaging railroad property," he growled. "I'm going to have a talk with your old man about this, Hassan."

The Emir of Arakand was in his palace, sitting on a heap of silken cushions, studying a draught board in front of him, when Danny's jeep screeched to a stop outside the gate. The Emir was a crafty-faced man with a black beard, and draughts was his main pastime.

He could beat all the members of his part at draughts, for they were too scared of him not to let him win. The only person he couldn't beat was Danny Dixon, who was also a draughts expert. A game of draughts between Danny and the Emir had been going on ever since the railroad had first started building.

"Look here, mate," began Danny warmly, clanking into the Emir's private chamber in his usual unceremonious way. "I'm having a bit of trouble."

"My unworthy son has been up to something?" inquired the Emir mildly. He nodded at the draught board. "Your move. I think."

Danny explained what had happened.

"So Sheik Razik is running his own private train on the railroad?" murmured the Emir, watching Danny's draughts move with hawk-like eyes. Secretly he was always pleased when something happened to put the train service out of gear. "I am grieved to hear this, my friend," he added blandly, "but there is nothing I can do about it."

"What do you mean—there's nothing you can do about it?" roared Danny. "You rule this flea-bitten country, don't you?"

"It is the right of Sheik Razik, according to ancient custom, to run his own train," explained the Emir. "His forefathers ran their own trains. It cannot be altered now. It is a custom that dates back hundreds of years."

"Hundreds of years?" echoed Danny, astonished. "But you didn't have trains hundreds of years ago." Then understanding dawned on him. "You're talking about camel trains!"

"Camel trains—iron trains—what does it matter?" The Emir stroked his beard and smiled blandly. "A train is a train."

"You crafty old villain," hissed Danny. "I wouldn't be surprised if you put that sheik up to this stunt yourself. You're only too happy to see the trains go wrong, so that you won't have to pay for the railroad."

"That is a hard thing to say of a man who would give his very life to aid you, Danny," protested the Emir, trying to look hurt. "Have I not given my own son to your railroad service?"

"Only because you didn't know what else to do with the young rascal," retorted Danny.

The Emir chuckled in his beard. His eyes were on the draught board. His last move had led Danny into a nice little trap. He gloated inwardly in anticipation as he waited for Danny to move.

"All I know is," said Danny, "that perishing sheik has got to get his train off our railroad. If you won't make him do it, then I'll find some way of getting rid of the contraption myself, even if I've got to put dynamite under it."

Then he moved one of his draughtsmen. To the Emir's consternation, instead of falling into the carefully-laid trap, Danny had made an entirely unexpected move. He captured one of the Emir's pieces and put the game in danger for the Emir.

"Now figure that one out," grunted Danny, and leaving the Emir blinking at the board, he ambled out of the palace.

Hassan's Hold-Up.

NEXT day in his little office at El Aza, which was the capital of Arakand and the headquarters of the railroad, Danny paced the floor and frowned. Hassan was sitting on the edge of the desk, watching him.

"What," inquired Hassan hopefully, "are we going to do now, Danny, sir?"

Danny chewed his pipe. The situation was growing desperate. All efforts to get Sheik Razik to remove his train from the line had failed. The Arab gunmen were still puffing

It was a couple of hours later that Sheik Razik's Pulling Billy came clanking along the main line in a cloud of smoke and steam. Then suddenly the sweating Arab driver popped his head out of the cab with a look of horror on his face.

Right ahead, in the middle of the track, was a little tent. Squatting outside the tent, brewing a can of tea over a fire, were Danny and Hassan. The train whistled shrieked wildly, but they took not the slightest notice of it. Danny just went on puffing at his pipe and stirring the tea.

The ancient engine clanked to a stop within a few yards of them. Sheik Razik, followed by a mob of armed guards, alighted from the train and strode with dignity towards Hassan.

"Greetings, worthy son of a noble father! May Allah forever lighten your countenance," he remarked. "Er—no this is an incon-



Danny had changed the signal to the "stop" position, but the sheik's train didn't stop. The Arab gunmen in the first carriage shot the signal to bits!

determinedly back and forth to the seaside, carrying the sheik's family and retainers.

To avoid accidents, all other trains had to give way to it, with the result that there were continual delays and the whole rail service was falling into hopeless confusion.

"The trouble is," muttered Hassan. "I can't collar Razik's train without a pitched battle, owing to that army of gunmen he's got aboard. I can't even stop him by driving my jeep across the track. He'd simply crash through it."

"I know one very simple way to make him stop," grinned Hassan. "I will sit on the track."

"He'd run you over, you young idiot!"

"He would not," said Hassan. "I am the Emir's son. He would lose not only his train, but his life as well, if he caused any harm to me. The sheik may not think much of your railroad company, but he is a great respecter of my father's laws."

Danny puffed at his pipe and chuckled.

"You've got brains, lad," he admitted.

"By gum, you're as crafty as your old man. Come on, we'll try it!"

venient place to camp?"

"It is my favourite spot," beamed Hassan.

"My friend, Danny, and I are very comfortable."

Sheik Razik scratched his beard.

"How long do you propose to camp here?" he inquired at last, cautiously.

"Oh, maybe days, maybe years—who knows?" chirped Hassan. "I am in no hurry to move."

Sheik Razik scratched his beard again. He was in a hurry to move. His family wanted to get to the seaside. But his train couldn't proceed while the Emir's son was camped on the track.

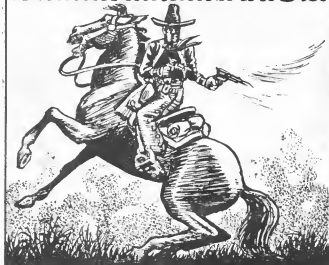
"Look here, mate," said Danny, "we may as well put our cards on the table. We're not shifting until you agree to move that rolling junk heap of a train off this track. And there's nothing you can do about it."

Sheik Razik pondered again. "But there is something I can do about it," he murmured, and he gave a signal to his men. They grabbed Hassan.

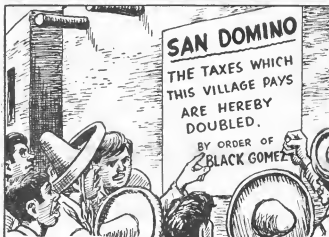
"Leggo!" yelled Hassan, struggling

(Continued on Page 222.)

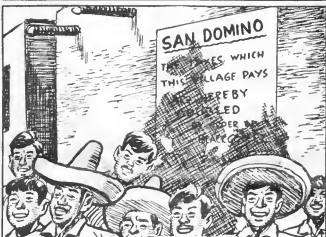
LEATHERFACE



1—The villagers of San Domino, in Mexico, were angry, but they dared not show it. Some of the bandits who terrorised the district had suddenly ridden into the village. The peons, already near starving point because of heavy taxes, were wondering what new burden Black Gomez, the bandit chief, was going to impose. While the bandits kept guard, one of Black Gomez' henchmen put up a notice.



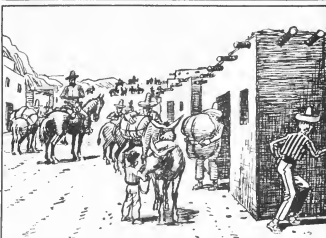
2—The villagers surged around the notice, but the bandits kept them back with blows from their rifle butts. It wasn't until the notice was in place, and the bandits were gone, that the peons learned their fate. By order of Black Gomez, the taxes were going to be doubled! The villagers could not possibly pay—and they knew what would happen. The bandit chief would have them shot!



3—"What can we do?" the elderly village chief exclaimed. "We have no weapons to fight Gomez and his men. We—" He stopped abruptly. The shadow of a horseman had fallen across the new tax notice. There was a sudden, deathly silence. Was it one of Gomez' men? The villagers turned to see the newcomer—and their grim expressions changed into smiles!



4—The newcomer was Leatherface, the secret United States marshal, and the peons knew him as their friend. The masked lawman had come to Mexico to rescue a Texas rancher from Gomez' clutches, but he'd stayed to carry on the fight against the bandits. "Friends, I reckon you won't be payin' these taxes," the masked marshal snapped. He dismounted and tore down the tax notice!



5—"You're leaving here?" rapped Leatherface. "I'm taking you across the border, out of Gomez' clutches." During the next hour there was a scene of great activity in San Domino, as the villagers began to evacuate their homes, with the mystery marshal directing operations. But, unknown to the lawman, Manuel Valdes, one of the villagers, was a traitor, and he slunk out of the village.



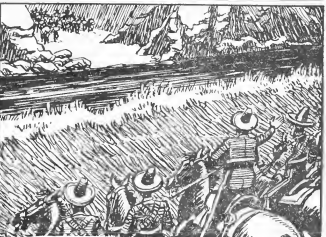
6—Valdes was one of Black Gomez' many paid spies, and now the renegade was going to reveal what was happening in San Domino. An hour or so later, Valdes reached the bandit stronghold, and here he broke the news to Black Gomez. The bandit leader went livid with rage. "Get the men together," he ordered a henchman. "I'll teach those villagers a lesson, and trap Leatherface at the same time!"



7—Black Gomez and the bandits ran for their horses. At the head of his men, the bandit chief rode out of the stronghold and set off over the hills. The spy from San Domino had discovered the route Leatherface intended to take, and Gomez meant to lay an ambush. He was going to show everyone how ruthless he was. Leatherface and the villagers were heading into a trap!



8—Meanwhile, Leatherface and the villagers were away from San Domino. The heavy-laden mules could not move quickly. Darkness was falling when the mystery lawman and the peons reached a range of hills. Leatherface was determined not to stop until the peons were out of Gomez' district completely. "Keep going!" he called to the weary villagers. "We'll soon be over the Rio Verde—and safe!"



9—The Rio Verde was the river which marked the boundary of Black Gomez' domain. Once over it the villagers should be safe, for they would be in Government-controlled territory. Leatherface urged on the tired peons, and presently they came to the ravine which led to the river. Unknown to them, danger lurked at the opposite side of the Rio Verde—Black Gomez and his men were there!



10—His rage for once overcoming his fear of entering Government territory, Gomez had positioned his men behind the bank at the only spot where it was possible to ford the Rio Verde. Black Gomez waited until Leatherface and the villagers were almost at the river. Then he snapped an order. The bandits surged up over the bank, and charged across the river. The villagers were put in a panic.



11—Leatherface tried to restore order, but the panic-struck peons turned and ran back up the ravine. The mystery marshal saw that the bandits would soon overtake the villagers and capture them. He could not hope to fight off Gomez' men in the ravine. He wheeled his horse round. Leatherface meant to stay free so that he could try to turn the tables on Black Gomez and his men later on!

Read about soccer's man of the moment

RITCHIE—HE BUILDS FOOTBALLERS

Congo Kicks.

RITCHIE, the famous manager of Bankburn Ramblers, the Second Division club, cast an inquiring look at Trainer Charlie Jordon as he appeared in the office doorway.

"Were stitches necessary?" he asked gruffly.

"No, thank goodness," answered the veteran trainer. "The cut wasn't as bad as it looked. The doctor didn't have to use the needle. He says Congo Jack should be quite all right to play on Saturday."

Ritchie's expression remained grim. He had a great goalkeeper in the young African, Congo Jack, but a determined effort was being made to get at Congo.

In order to help Congo Jack perfect his handling, and to introduce a touch of novelty into training, Ritchie had bought a couple of rubber balls. Half an hour previously, while catching one of the balls, the goalie had cut his right hand severely.

How the cut had been inflicted was a mystery—except to Lotzi Warbeck, the other goalie. He had managed to get rid of the silver of a safety-razor blade that had been inserted in a seam. Warbeck thought that he, and not Congo Jack, should be playing for the Ramblers' League team.

"It beats me how Congo cut his hand," the trainer muttered.

"I guess we weren't quick enough in spotting a bit of sabotage," growled Ritchie. "For the first time since I've been in football there's a definite conspiracy to get at one of my players. For the moment it's baffling, but we'll get through to the facts and then some people are going to regret it."

"Congo Jack has got in it in his head that a bad ju-ju is working against him," said Charlie.

Congo Jack, who was very tall and gawky, had returned to the pitch with his hand bandaged. The players except Warbeck, were very relieved to hear that the cut was not so bad as had appeared.

A tremendous match was in prospect for Saturday when the Ramblers had to go to London to play promotion rivals, Selhurst Rovers.

A few months previously there would have been loud laughter in Bankburn if anyone had suggested the Ramblers might be taking part in the promotion hunt. A battle against relegation would have been considered a certainty.

Now promotion talk was in the air. The Ramblers were seventh in the League and because of their success in the Cup, had a game in hand over Selhurst Rovers, who were sixth.

Charlie Jordon bustled out. He counted the players who were available. There were sixteen of them.

"Right, we'll have an eight-a-side game," he said. "Split yourselves up! You can't be a goalie, Congo Jack."

Congo Jack scratched his head.

"Dis am a bit of a puzzle for de boss won't let me kick de ball," he mumbled.

Ritchie, who had followed Charlie down the gangway, limping on a thick walking-stick as his left knee was weak because of old soccer injuries, heard the remark.

"You can kick the ball this morning," he called out, for he knew that Congo Jack would have been miserable if left out of the game. Congo's kicking was hopeless, and he always threw the ball instead of kicking during matches.

Congo Jack flashed a smile.

"Watch out, Whizzbanger, or I shall be de new centre-forward," he said.



Whizzbang Webster, the young centre-forward, did not appear to be worried at having Congo Jack as a rival.

Warbeck and Pip Orange, the outside-left, were the goalkeepers when the game started.

When Whizzbang had a shooting chance he really let fly at the goal in which Warbeck was playing.

Warbeck's heels flew up in the air and he dived on the ball to make a brilliant save.

"He's no dud as a goalkeeper," was the thought that passed through Ritchie's mind. "Temperament has been his trouble. I'd like to see him get on top of his moods."

Warbeck had been pretty crafty during the past days. It seemed as if he were trying to live up to Ritchie's advice to concentrate more and to show he was a good club man. On the Saturday he had not let through a goal for the Reserves and Clem Warden, the director in charge, had reported that he had played a great game.

Warbeck threw the ball to the wing. Congo Jack gave it a prod with his toe and ran that way like an ostrich. He swung his foot with the idea of putting across a centre.

After a pause came a thud as the ball hit a seat in the grandstand. It was not until he heard the sound that Congo Jack knew where the ball had gone.

"I reckon I kicked it off de wrong side ob my big toe," he muttered.

"Whoa," shouted Ritchie after watching a forward movement. He advanced on to the pitch. "I noticed it on Saturday and you're doing it again now. There are far too many back passes. An occasional back pass can be useful, but it is away from the goal which is bad, and it gives the defence a bit more time for positioning which is worse! Keep the ball moving towards the goal and you're going the right way! Carry on!"

The next time the ball reached Congo Jack he kicked it at it with a scowl of concentration on his ebony face. In a most peculiar way it swerved off his foot and flew backwards.

He cast an apologetic look at Ritchie.

"Dat was not a deliberate back pass, boss," he explained. "It come from a misunderstanding between my foot and de ball."

The Powder Plot.

IN a room in the large house that had been converted into a hostel for engineering students from overseas, three conspirators met on the Thursday night.

It was Ngwali's room. Round three of the walls stretched the skin of a python. On the mantelpiece, among other objects, was a rattle made out of a rhinoceros tusk. Ngwali was a young African with doctor, who was a student at Bankburn Technical College. His people were enemies of Congo Jack's tribe, and Ngwali was out to hurt Congo. So far his attempts had not had much success.

Lotzi Warbeck and Dong Dacre had very different motives for arriving on a campaign against Congo Jack. The former wanted Congo to flop as a goalkeeper so that he would take his place. Dacre had a deep-rooted grudge against Ngwali. It was on the advice of Ritchie that Dacre had been dropped by the United Bankburn's First Division team.

What stung Dacre, who was a selfish player, even worse was that since he had been out of the side it had started to win matches again.

"We're getting nowhere," exclaimed Dacre. "We haven't thrown a big enough scare into Congo Jack to frighten a bit, ken."

He shook his head at the two conspirators.

"We want to see the Ramblers take a good hiding from the Rovers," he rasped. "Yeh, that will wipe the smirk from Ritchie's face. It points out to promotion rivals wouldn't you, eh, back. How the heck can we do it?"

Ngwali rose from the settee on which he had been leaning. His keys rattled. There was a strange dusty smell as he opened a cupboard.

Warbeck and Dacre stared curiously as he fetched out a glass phial. He removed the screw top and they saw it contained a fine, brown powder.

"What's that stuff?" Warbeck asked.

"I will not advise you to sniff de powder up," said Ngwali.

"Is it magic?" Dacre muttered. "I'm having to hang in with murder. No, that's not hanging things too far."

"Touch it with a finger," Ngwali purred. "It will not hurt you."

Dacre scowled but he rubbed a finger-tip against the phial. Ngwali held the phial to Warbeck and he hesitated, and then did the same.

Moments passed and then Dacre spoke tensely.

"Heck, my finger's going cold," he said. "There's no feeling in it! It's gone numb!"

Ngwali chuckled thickly.

"Alleghe it has worked so speak will you because of your white skin," he remarked. "I think it would take half an hour to take de use out of de legs of Congo Jack."

"It has paralysed me," Warbeck spluttered as he rubbed at his finger.

Ngwali cackled.

"De powder comes from de tree and we mix it wid other herbs to make de effects very powerful," he said.

"I guess it's the witch doctor's version of knock-out drops?" Dacre muttered.

Ngwali nodded. He was pleased with the surprise he had created.

"Dat is so," he said. "De powder will give de leg, to an elephant."

He leaned towards them and he muttered malignantly. "You see, de powder is de football boots of de Ramblers."

"Gosh, that's a bit funny," Dacre remarked, extremely.

"How will it take me?" Warbeck asked.

"De paralysis will be quick," said Ngwali. "He will be out in five minutes."

"That's the stuff," Dacre said, and he interrupted Dacre.

"Then, quite soon, the Ramblers will be de big game."

Ngwali chuckled.

Dey will have to carry de powder de Ramblers will be left with de powder de big game."

Dacre glanced elated at Ngwali.

"It's the stuff," he said, and he fetched a winner out of his pocket.

"Wait a minute," said Ngwali.

The witch doctor who tried to put Congo Jack in a deep freeze!

me who would have to dope his boots and I'm not chancing him passing out for good."

"No, no, he will not die," he said. "In a few hours he will walk again, though he will be full of pans."

"Yep, my finger is starting to tingle," exclaimed Dacre. "You've nothing to be scared of, pal! Don't miss this chance of making a big ape out of Congo Jack and getting your own back on Ritchie."

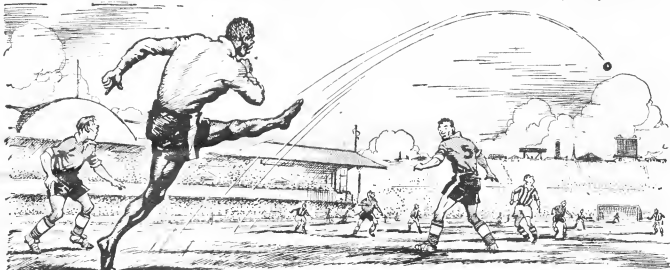
Warbeck put out his hand for the phial. "I'm satisfied," he said. "I'll dust his boots."

In The Wet.

IT was at about twelve o'clock on Friday that the players left Dale Park, the Ramblers' ground, to get their dinner. The first team were travelling to London on the 4.30 p.m. train and would be returning to the Dale to pick up their tackle. The Reserves had been given the afternoon off.

Lofly Warbeck left the ground in company with the others, but within a few minutes came back. He pushed the door open carefully, eased through into the passage and listened. The only sound was that of a typewriter thumping away in the office.

His expression was tense as he crept along the passage. He was anxious, but in his eyes was a hard, determined glitter.



You've seen a goalkeeper take a free-kick before, but you've never seen one kick a ball so far—with his bare feet!

He knew the dressing-room door had a creek, so he steeled himself to open it inch by inch.

Charlie Jordan had a neat and tidy way of doing things, and he had left everything ready. He did not like last-minute rushes.

The players' boots, brightly polished, were set out along the table, ready for them to put in their bags. Shirts, shorts and stockings were arranged in tidy piles. There was a big stack of towels. All these would go in the skip. Even the first-aid bag was ready.

Warbeck moved silently to the table. His gaze fixed on Congo Jack's boots. They were easy to pick out because of their large size.

Warbeck's hand was sliding into his pocket for the phial when he went rigid. He heard tip, tap, tip, tap.

"Heck, it's Ritchie," he gasped.

Warbeck tip-toed to the archway leading into the adjacent bathroom. Just as he got through he heard the creek of the door.

Scared stiff of being caught, Warbeck lifted aside the canvas sheet hanging over the tiled cubicle containing a showerbath and stepped inside. He heard Ritchie moving about the dressing-room.

The shower had a leaky valve. Warbeck stood in a fine, hissing spray of cold water, not daring to budge.

Ritchie had come into the dressing-room merely to take a few rough measurements.

Charlie Jordan had complained of lack of lockers, and Ritchie wanted to see if there was space for a few more.

"Yes, I think we can fix in another tier at the end of the room," Ritchie thought. "I'll collar the carpenter as soon as I can."

He turned and limped out of the room. Looking as if he had been caught in the rain, Warbeck emerged from the showerbath. Muttering angrily, he gave himself a shake.

He heard Ritchie go away along the passage. The outer door was banged shut.

"All clear now," Warbeck decided and, stealing towards the table, took the phial out of his pocket, unscrewed the top and picked up Congo Jack's boots.

Doug Dacre waited for Warbeck at the corner of Dale Street and the main road.

When Warbeck came hurrying along, he turned up his thumbs.

"You've done the trick, then?" Dacre exclaimed.

"Yep, it was a piece of cake," answered Warbeck. "I've given Congo Jack a pair of cold feet!"

When Charlie Jordan got back after dinner, he heard voices in the dressing-room. He found that there was in there with Mr Davis, the carpenter.

"We're planning the lockers, Charlie," Ritchie said. "Mr Davis stays near me, so

corridor. The team reached their hotel soon after ten o'clock and most of the players turned in at once.

It was raining in the morning, but there was a blink of watery sunshine when the motor coach picked up the Ramblers at the hotel.

Though they were in very good time, there were thousands of spectators already in the Selhurst stadium when they arrived. "Boys, it seems that we are de big attraction," observed Congo Jack.

"Mehbe we'll stay that way if you don't start playing your trombone," said Flipper Johnson, the team captain.

The players unpacked their bags before going out to have a look at the pitch.

Ritchie limped into the dressing-room where Charlie Jordan, with his jacket off, was preparing for action. Charlie stripped the wrappings off a big roll of cotton wool.

He remarked to Ritchie that he expected the pitch would be pretty soft after the rain, but did not get an answer.

The manager was looking at the boots on the table. The players had put them down anyhow, but the trainer had subsequently arranged them in a neat row.

"Something has just come back into my head, Charlie," growled Ritchie. "I guess it has been tucked away in my mind all the

I got hold of him after dinner."

"I'll be glad to have the extra space," exclaimed the trainer, pleased that Ritchie had taken prompt notice of his complaint.

Voices resounded in the passage. Into the room clattered Whizzbang, Sailor Webb, and Congo Jack, who was carrying his second-hand trombone.

"Start packing," said Charlie Jordan.

Warbeck, whose digs were not far from the station, turned up on the platform to see his clubmates off.

"Best of luck," he said to Congo Jack. "I've kept goal against the Rovers and my tip is—Harry Hodgson has two feet but prefers to use his left."

"Ay, you're right, Lofly," granted Ritchie at this mention of the Selhurst centre-forward.

"That's a good hint!"

"I shall remember de warning, pal," said Congo Jack.

During the journey Ritchie left his compartment and limped along the corridor to speak to the restaurant-car conductor about the meal they were going to have before reaching London.

He observed that most of the players were jammed into one compartment. When he looked into the next compartment he understood why.

Congo Jack had his trombone to his lips and was playing. He was alone.

Chuckling, Ritchie went away down the

time, but seeing that row of boots has just given my memory a powerful jog."

The trainer stared at him in bewilderment. "What are you getting at, boss?" he demanded.

Ritchie scowled thoughtfully.

"It was yesterday," he said. "I noticed the boots on the table when I went into the dressing-room just before dinner. Three-quarters of an hour later I was back with Mr Davis. In between something had happened, just a small thing, Charlie, but I can see it in my mind's eye now."

"Eh? What was it?" the trainer gasped. Ritchie spoke slowly.

"One pair of boots had been turned round," he said. "This pair—"

"Congo Jack's!" exclaimed Jordan.

Ritchie picked up the boots. He turned them over inquiringly. As he did so a cloud of brown powder drifted out of them and some of it settled on his hand.

Barerefot Soccer.

"GET on up to it, Ramblers," roared The Voice, the Ramblers' outspoken supporter. "I ain't come all this way to see yer scratching about like a lot of hens!"

This criticism was suddenly forthcoming from the terrace because the Ramblers' passes were not finding their men. The soft pitch was taking the pace off the ball and Whizzbang and his fellow forwards had not

yet adapted themselves to the conditions.

Ritchie walked down the gangway about five minutes after the game had started. Charlie Jordan turned anxiously.

"What does the doctor say?" he asked. "What took the feeling out of your hand?"

"Some sort of narcotic," answered Ritchie harshly, rubbing his hand. "It's beginning to warm up again now, but there was a mighty powerful dose in Congo Jack's boots and the doctor reckons we should have been carrying him off before half-time if he'd worn the boots."

"It was a darned dirty dodge," the trainer snarled.

"We'll think about it after the match," said Ritchie. "How's Congo Jack shaping in Flipper's boots?"

"He hasn't had much to do yet," replied Charlie.

The inside-left had loaned his boots to the goalie, and was wearing the pair belonging to the travelling reserve.

The crowd roared as the home team moved to the attack and Slingby, the inside-left, gave Harry Hodgson a shooting chance.

The ball was a blur as he slashed it goalwards.

Then the home fans yelled jubilantly as Congo Jack moved slowly, failed to get to the ball and was beaten.

Ritchie pushed himself up. He walked round the pitch to the goal.

"What's the matter with you, Congo?" he asked.

Congo gave him a miserable look.

"De boots am crippling me," he moaned. "Then take them off," said Ritchie. "I thought you were hobbling. That's why I came round."

The attention of the crowd was fixed on the other end. Flipper hooked the ball ahead of Whizzbang and the centre-forward brought it down and shot.

Barrington, the home goalkeeper, was beaten by the pace of the ball, but it hit the crossbar and wiped the expectant grin off Whizzbang's face.

A defender cleared to Slingby. He swerved and then put Hodgson on the run.

furiously. "I am the Emir's son. You can't make me a prisoner!"

"I would not dream of it," smiled Sheikh Razik. "You are not my prisoner. You are my guest. It is a custom of our country that when hospitality is offered it is never refused. You shall be my guest, Hassan, and shall travel on my train with me."

The guards marched Hassan away and bundled him aboard the train. There wasn't much Danny could do, seeing that he was surrounded by armed men.

The Arabs took the tent away from the track and the train prepared to move on again.

"I'm responsible for young Hassan's safety," Danny informed Sheikh Razik grudgingly. "If you're keeping him aboard your train, I'll have to come, too."

"I am a generous man," smiled the sheik, rubbing his hands with triumph. "By all means come, O Danny. You shall also ride as my guest."

Danny climbed aboard the train and sat next to Hassan. The Emir's son was looking glum as the train lurched forward and continued on its journey.

"I fear things have not turned out as we had hoped, Danny, sir," he sighed. "We are in a proper mess now."

"Oh, I wouldn't say that," commented Danny, puffing on his pipe. "The old sheik may think he's got things all his own way, but he hasn't, you know, mate."

The train rumbled on steadily for a couple of miles, then suddenly the driver let rip a piercing blast on the whistle and jerked to a stop again.

"What is wrong now?" demanded Sheikh Razik.

AIR LINES

A Conberro of R.A.F. Bomber Command flew from R.A.F. Wyton to Aden, on October 24, 1955. The distance of 3220 miles was flown at 492 m.p.h.

An unmanned rocket sledge has travelled at 1280 m.p.h. over a 4-mile course, according to a report from the U.S. Naval aeronautics testing station in California.

B.O.A.C.'s winter timetable gives the time for the London to Tokio service as 45½ hours.

Sailor Webb slipped and the centre-forward raced past him. Thwack! Hodgson shot with tremendous force.

Congo Jack dived like a black panther and brought the ball down. Only then did the spectators, near enough to see, observe that he had taken off his boots and stockings and was playing in bare feet.

He sprang up nimbly and bounced the ball under his hand, in basketball style, to the front of the penalty-area. He caught it and threw it to Flipper.

The Ramlers' vivid colours converged on the home goal and, from a snappy pass from Whizzbang, Pip Orange screwed the ball just inside the post to equalise.

The second half was a thriller. The Rovers tried everything they knew, and they knew a lot, to score.

Congo Jack would not be beaten. His speed across the goalmouth was incredible on his handling never at fault.

It was during a meal after a corner that Hodgson trod on Congo's foot.

"Sorry," exclaimed the centre-forward.

Congo Jack grunted after completing a clearance.

"That's all right, boy," he said. "At home when we didn't have a football we used to play wild cokenuts."

DANNY DIXON'S LAZY, CRAZY RAILWAY

(Continued from Page 217.)

"Some brainless goat has altered the points, Excellency," bawled the driver from his cab. "We have been switched on to a siding."

The sheik glared along the track. The train was no longer on the main line. It was on a single-track siding, which terminated in a dead end.

"Reverse the engine," Sheikh Razik commanded the driver furiously. "Go backwards until you reach the main line. He glowered at Danny. "This, I suspect, is your doing?"

"That's right, mate," agreed Danny. "I had some of Hassan's scheme might come unstuck, so I decided to make other arrangements, just in case. Look!"

He pointed with his pipe back along the track. From behind a ridge of sand, where they had been hiding, dozens of Arab plate-layers had emerged. Working at feverish speed, they were ripping up the rails. Already there was a large gap of bare sand between the siding and the main line.

The Emir's train was marooned on the siding!

"Keep backing, you earless uncle of a baboon!" the sheik bellowed in fury at the driver. "Keep backing till I tell you to stop!"

"But there are no rails for the train to run on, Excellency," protested the driver, who had already backed to the point where the rails ended.

Sailor Webb took a hard knock on his hip near the end, and then Horace Mason was fetched down and took a rap on an ankle.

The referee blew for a free-kick near the front of the Ramlers' penalty-area.

"You'll have to take the kick," gasped Horace to Congo Jack, who had grabbed the ball and placed it for him. "It'll be all right with the boss, as Sailor and I are crooked."

Congo Jack hesitated, glanced towards Ritchie and then backed away.

He ran and swung his leg. His foot connected with the ball.

The crowd screamed as the ball sped on and on up the pitch. Flipper Hodgson did not have to move. He headed the ball into the middle.

Whizzbang, who had run forward, promptly gathered the ball, closed in and banded it past Barrington.

Charlie Jordan gasped.

"Congo can kick with his boots off," he squawked.

That evening Warbeck and Dacre were standing at a street corner when a newsboy rushed along with the Sports Finals. They knew the result, but not any of the details.

"I suppose that somehow they won with ten men," Dacre said harshly.

"Maybe the Rovers had a player off injured," suggested Warbeck and bought a paper.

The headline that met their angry eyes was—Congo Jack Makes Winning Goal With His Boots Off!

Dacre glowered at the report, which began—

"After taking off a borrowed pair of boots, Congo Jack turned in the greatest display of goalkeeping seen in London for many a long day, and capped his brilliant performance with a long kick that led to the winning goal—"

"Heck, we seem to have won the match for the blasted Ramlers," snarled Dacre, while Warbeck looked as if he were swallowing a lump of lead.

"We'll have to get really rough,"

Ritchie goes hunting for the witch doctor NEXT THURSDAY. Will he find Ngwahl?

"Go on! Go on!" raved the sheik, shaking his fists. "Drive the train as I order! It has wheels! It will move! Drive it across the gap until you are able to regain the rails once more."

Slung resignedly, the driver turned back to his engine controls. The train began moving backwards once more. It lurched off the metals and ploughed through the sand.

Unfortunately, the sand was soft. The wheels sank into it. Danny watched with a grin. The faster the wheels turned, the deeper the sinking burrowed in the sand.

In desperation, the driver gave it full throttle. The ancient iron wheels churned up clouds of sand, but the engine refused to budge. It was rattling and shaking violently. Black smoke and steam gushed from it. The driver cut out a steam pipe in the sand.

"With your Excellency's permission," he howled, "I tender my resignation. The boiler is about to blow up!"

He got clear just in time. Tuffing Billy was turning red hot. Suddenly the boiler burst and the whole contraption blew sky-high.

Nobody was hurt, but it was the end of Sheikh Razik's private train. All the engineers in the world couldn't have picked up those pieces and put them together again.

The sheik was forced to cancel his trip to the seaside and release Hassan and Danny.

But in the end Danny managed to arrange things to everybody's satisfaction. He gave the sheik and his family a permanent season ticket, which enabled them to travel to the seaside whenever they wished—but only on the company's own trains!

A camel dealer is out to get Danny NEXT THURSDAY. There's a lot of fun before he learns his mistake!

Meet Charlie the Kettle—the war's most reluctant hero!



CHARLIE THE KETTLE — THE MAN WHO HAUNTED HITLER

The Train Buster.

AT THING I found out soon after the train left Paris was that cattle trucks are not well sprung. The truck in which I was riding, in company with a bunch of cows, also appeared to have square wheels.

I am Charlie the Kettle, from London, and I had always taken care to keep out of trouble and lead a comfortable life. If anybody had told me that I should become a British Secret Service agent during the Second World War and start sparring at close quarters with the Gestapo, I should have said he was crazy.

Now it was true, and, wearing a bowler hat with a cow's hair, I stood between a spotted cow and the end of the truck. Smoke and sparks swirled round us.

Under my clothes I wore a celluloid belt with compartments containing spools of microfilm. I had left one film in Paris, and was now heading for Brussels, where I was to contact a fellow who was known as Feather Fingers. If all went well I had then to go on to Hamburg, Munich, Vienna, and Berlin. The mission had to be completed inside a month.

It was a big change from being in London and cashing in on the knack I had of taking the aches and pains out of bones and muscles. I had been a sap, so it seemed, when I accidentally volunteered for the mission, and I had intended to duck for cover and stay in hiding. Then I saw a little Frenchman swallow a poison pill sooner than risk betraying his pals to the Nazis. That did something to me. When that Frenchman dropped dead, Charlie the Kettle declared war on the Germans. Some time I'll tell you how I acquired my nickname.

The train went banging through some points, and the spotted cow nearly flattened me.

I'd scrambled into the cattle truck for two reasons—first because the S.S. were chasing me, and secondly because I'd heard a railwayman say the cows were going to Belgium. I can speak French and German, because my parents had worked a knife-throwing act in an international circus, and I had gone about with them.

The only silver lining to a lot of clouds was that by riding with the cattle I should get across the boundary into Belgium without trouble. Cows did not have to carry passports, travel permits, and identity cards.

Then another thought came to me. The S.S. men at the frontier posts would have been

alerted to look for a small, sooty-looking person who had created a lot of trouble for the Paris Gestapo chief, Dr Hlang.

It was a cold, clear night, and starry. Our engine whistled. I looked ahead and saw a lot of signal lamps, so it seemed we were coming to a big station.

Then, suddenly, I heard a racket that was not made by the train.

The racket came from the sky, and it grew louder every second. Then I heard the cannon snarling.

I made to scramble out of the truck, losing my bowler in the process, but, before I could succeed, the plane howled overhead.

When I was in London, about fifty years previously, as it seemed, I'd read bits in the newspapers about our R.A.F. Train Busters. I never dreamed that I should be in a train that was being "busted."

The aircraft howled overhead. The pilot must have had eyes like a cat, but he was taking a terrible chance in flying so low.

Since the cows and I survived, the blast of cannon-fire must just have missed our truck. I was rocked about violently as the train came grinding to a stop. The engine must have been punctured, for there was a terrific hiss of steam. From down the train came the crackling of flames. Something was burning, all right. A ruddy glow lit up the scenery. Before I had a chance of getting out, a shunting engine slammed against the back of the train.

A railwayman slung the couplings ahead of us loose, and the shunting loco went into reverse. About a dozen vehicles, including the cattle trucks, were pulled away from the burning part of the train.

Some of those burning trucks must have contained ammunition, for as the blaze grew fiercer, I heard the bullets popping off like fireworks.

The Colonel's Guest.

I WAS pondering about what to do next when I heard a hiss of steam and a clanking. A huge engine loomed up on the adjacent track. It was hauling passenger coaches and Wagons Lit—which is the French name for sleeping-cars—and was heading north.

I just made out the name "Bruxelles" on a board under a window. That identified the train for me. It was the international express to Brussels.

The brakes bit, and the express grunted

to a stop. The train was held up, of course, because it would have been dangerous for it to pass the burning vehicles. The bullets were still popping off, and the glare must have been seen for miles.

Blinds flipped up in the sleeping-cars. The windows were pulled down. Heads stuck out. The heads appeared to belong to German officers.

Some of the Germans cast glances at the sky. Maybe they thought the train buster might come back.

Just opposite my cattle truck an officer, who was wearing purple pyjamas, leaned from his window. He had a bald head, and a moustache that was brushed up at the ends.

Remarks were slung about between Bald Head and another officer at the next window. Bald Head was addressed as "Colonel."

From what the two officers said, they were annoyed by the R.A.F. train buster. The colonel wondered if the flak batteries defending the station and nearby marshalling-yard had been brought into action.

"We shall be held up for some time," the colonel said gruffly. "I will make inquiries on the spot. These raids are becoming a menace."

He pulled his head back into his compartment, grunted as he shoved the window up and snatched the blind down. A few minutes later it snapped up again for me to see the colonel now wearing his uniform. He slammed his cap on and opened the door on the far side that led out into the corridor. The door swung shut behind him, and I was left looking into the empty sleeper.

The colonel soon reappeared, climbing down from the doorway at the end of the coach. Other officers followed him out. They tramped along between the trains, making their way cautiously forward.

Chums, I may have been daft, but I did it. I gave the spotted cow a smack on its rump by way of farewell, climbed up, and looked up and down.

I dangled my legs over the side, hung on by my hands for a few moments, and then let go. Scared of being seen, I bounced across the space between the trains. The running-board of the sleeping car was as high as my head, if not higher. I got up on to it by using an axle box as a step.

You see, chums, the colonel had not quite shut his window, so I poked my fingers over the top and pulled it down. I was through that window in quick time by lifting myself

Read about the tune that saved Charlie's life

inspectors and several German military police were waiting.

"I've got to grab a taxi for an officer," I called out.

The station officials only cast casual glances at me. My face would not be familiar, but I wore the right uniform for moving freely about a station.

The military-style kitbag was a help. One of the police made the comment that several taxis were waiting outside the station.

I legged it towards the vehicles. I made for the taxi at the head of the line.

"I've got to get to the Royal Hotel quickly," I said to the taxi driver.

The fellow gave a surly nod. He wore a shabby leather jacket. I scrambled into the taxi, and steamed with anxiety. The engine made a spluttering sound as the driver pulled at the self-starter.

My knees began shaking as the driver got out of his seat with the starting-handle and went round to the front of the taxi. He pushed the handle in and started to wobble round. The engine wheezed and spluttered. I stared through the back window and did not like what I saw. Uproar had broken out round the barrier. I saw that a tall German officer was there, and was gesticulating fiercely. Two of the police burst through the rack and came along at a run.

The Getaway.

THE engine tooted and the driver returned unhurriedly to his seat. Two other taxis pulled out round us and buzzed on. My knees imitated drumsticks. If the engine failed to keep going I was trapped.

A cloud of fine smoke shot from the exhaust, and the taxi lurched into movement and beat another wobble to the archway.

Through my teeth I began to whistle a tune that Claude de Vacher, the secret agent I'd contacted in Paris, had taught me. It was a recognised signal between members of the Resistance Movement.

The driver's head jerked round.

"Where d'you go?" he asked.

"Chums, my luck was in the gun machine how I felt at finding that the Resistance was a member of the Resistance."

"Step on it, comrade," I said. "I guess the chase has started."

What happened immediately was that the driver, whose name was Albert, turned his lights on and off several times.

I knew it must be a signal to other comrades, and looked rearwards. The drivers of two taxis following us out of the station appeared to have a slight misapprehension. One pulled across in front of me. The taxis blocked the road, and the German police jeep that was following could not get out.

I was hurled into a corner by the sudden turn. Albert made into a side street.

"Where d'you want to go?" he asked.

"Can I leave it to you?" I asked.

"Righto, I know where to take you," said Albert.

"I hope this isn't going to get you into a lot of hot water," I exclaimed.

"No, I'll think up a story," Albert answered. "I'll say that you asked to be taken to the Royal Hotel, and that I thought you were delivering some baggage for a German officer. I'll say I dropped and broke by the hotel."

Albert seemed to have a good alibi, and I relaxed a bit. He was steering across through a maze of streets. I knew we were in the Saint-Gilles area, which was the district I wanted. As I have told you earlier on, the man to whom I was to pass the second microfilm was known as Feather Fingers. I had met him when he was doing an act with the circus in the way of removing the spectators' belts and braces without their knowing.

Claude had told me that he was now a leader of the Belgian Resistance—and worked from the prison! He had been given a convenient sentence of twelve months'

imprisonment and, while the Gestapo were looking for him outside, was using his cell as headquarters. Naturally, he had to receive co-operation from the warders, and the first fellow I had to find was one of them, Warder 116, by name Garand.

Albert squeezed his taxi into a narrow lane with tall houses of the tenement type on either side.

"Get ready for a quick departure," he exclaimed. "I'm going to put you down outside the lodging-house kept by Jules Derrider. All you need say to him is that his establishment has been recommended to you by M'sieur Barron, and that you would like Room Eleven. You can trust Derrider!"

I opened my wallet and fished out the Belgian equivalent of five pounds. Major Denton, the Secret Service chief in London, had provided me with plenty of money.

grimy blue apron tied round his middle.

I asked him if he was Mr Derrider. "Yes," he said with a sniff, "but it's no use coming here. My place is full up."

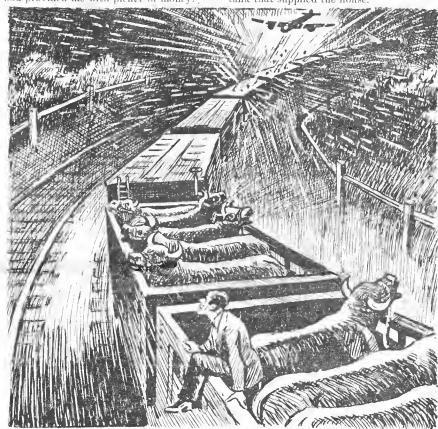
I kept my voice down.

But M'sieur Barron recommended your establishment," I told him, "and suggested that you might have Room Eleven available."

Derrider pointed at the stairs.

"Go on up," he whispered. "It's at the top of the house. Quick, I'm expecting the police here to inspect the register."

At his order to "get up them stairs," I departed quickly. I arrived under the tiles at the top landing. It sounded as if somebody were being strangled in the first room, but the door was open, and I realised that the gurgles came from a big galvanised water tank that supplied the house.



Charlie was in a tough spot. He was in a train being shot up by an R.A.F. plane.

Albert shook his head, but I stuck the notes into his pocket.

"Take it, pal," I said. "It goes down against working expenses for downing the Germans."

"The rats!" spat Albert. "Get ready—it's the door on the left just past the next lamp post."

I grabbed hold of Colonel Hasser's kitbag and briefcase. Albert slowed down. I shot a glance back through the window. There were only a few lads playing about.

I opened the door, skipped out, slammed it shut, and crossed the narrow pavement in a stride. The taxi buzzed away, and I hoped that Albert would get away with his alibi. He had taken a terrible risk.

A few moments later I found myself in a dark hall of the house Albert had indicated. The plaster had come off the walls in patches. The stairs were bare boards. There was a fusty smell.

"What d'you want?"

My toes curled inside my shoes, for the voice was startling. It came from the doorway of a small room by the entrance.

The question had been snapped at me by a disagreeable-looking man of about forty. He did not wear a collar and tie, and had a

"No. 11" was painted on the next door. I went in. It was an attic with a sloping ceiling, and was furnished with a narrow iron bedstead.

After all I had been through, chums, it seemed like a port in a storm.

I was out of the storm for no more than five minutes. Then Derrider came flapping up the stairs in his slippers.

"The police have made their inspection," he panted.

"There's nothing to worry about, then," I remarked, with a poor sense of timing.

"I shall have to get you away," Derrider puffed. "A loyal policeman tipped me off that the Gestapo are working through this district searching for a wireless transmitter. They won't find it here, but they'll poke their noses into every corner."

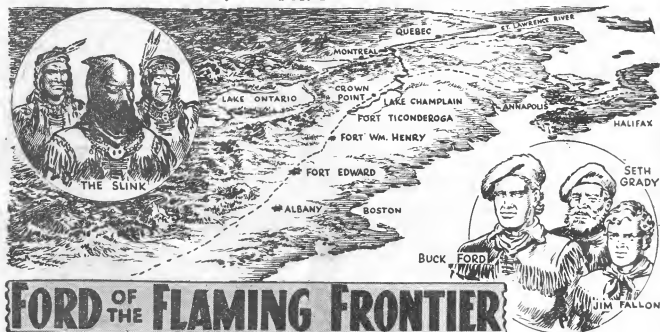
"Yeah, I'd better scam," I muttered. "I must be the top name on their black list, pal."

A shrill feminine voice, the voice of Madame Derrider, came waiting up to our ears.

"Jules, Jules, come down quickly!" she squealed. "The Germans are here!"

Charlie is in hot water just now, but NEXT THURSDAY he gets into cold water to escape the Nazis.

THIS IS A TERRIFIC STORY ABOUT THE MEN WHO FOUGHT THE LONG BATTLE FOR CANADA!



FORD OF THE FLAMING FRONTIER

Gunpowder Rescue.

JIM FALLON raced through the woods. From the Iroquois village behind him came the angry shouts of the Indians.

It was 1757, and a bitter war was raging in North America between Britain and France. The outcome would decide who would gain Canada and the North American colonies.

The French had already won over several Indian tribes as their allies, but if Britain could gain the friendship of the Iroquois, whose lands were deep inside French-held territory, it would cause the French no end of trouble.

The task of contacting the Iroquois in their village on an island in the middle of the Sackett Marshes had been given to four men of the famous troop of backwoodsmen known as Rogers' Rangers. They were Buck Ford, who was six feet four inches tall, the small, wiry old-timer, Seth Grady, and the red-headed Clancy twins. Dressed in their green buckskins and Balmoral-type bonnets, the Rangers had made their way to the Indian village, taking with them young Jim Fallon, whose parents had been murdered by a marauding gang of Abenaki Indians, allied to the French.

But when they reached the Iroquois village, the Rangers discovered that they were too late. The French had got there before them and had made a treaty with the Iroquois. The Redskins attacked the Rangers. Jim Fallon escaped, but his friends were all captured.

As soon as Jim realised that his four friends had not escaped with him, his first impulse was to run back to their aid, but he knew that that would be suicidal. His best plan was to remain free until he found an opportunity to help his comrades. He only hoped they had not been killed outright by the ferocious Iroquois.

It seemed the savages had been too busy subduing Buck Ford and the other Rangers to give chase immediately, for when Jim glanced behind him he could see no sign of pursuit. That the Indians would soon come after him, Jim realised only too well.

He wheeled to the right and, stepping carefully to avoid leaving a trail, he circled the village.

He followed a deep creek which had made an inroad into the island and which ended in a stagnant pool close to the outskirts of the Iroquois village. Jim sought a place of concealment. His eyes lighted on a number of

slender reeds growing out of the muddy creek, and he remembered a trick Seth Grady had told him about. He broke off one of the reeds and trimmed it at the end which normally would have been under the water.

Staying close to the creek, and keeping hold of the reed, he crept as near as he could to the village. Through masking bushes he watched Buck Ford, Seth Grady and the Clancy twins being thrown, bound hand and foot, into one of the Iroquois huts. The Indians placed a guard of four armed men round the hut.

Jim saw kegs of gunpowder, muskets and bags of bullets being unloaded from pack mules. The arms and ammunition had been brought by Jim and his companions as good-will offerings to the Iroquois.

The Indians gathered up the rifles and equipment of the four captured Rangers and put them in another hut, together with the guns and ammunition taken from the mules. The Iroquois chief rapped out orders, and twenty braves moved out of the village. Jim guessed that they were coming to search for him.

Other savages dragged five smoke-blackened stakes into the clearing and began to erect them in a line. Jim recognised them for what they were—torture stakes. Evidently the Iroquois were sure they would capture Jim, for they were erecting five stakes although they had only four prisoners.

Jim tensed as a crackling sounded in the undergrowth somewhere on his right. He heard two Indians calling to each other and realised it was time for him to get out of sight.

He stood his rifle deep in the foliage of a bush, then slithered noiselessly down the bank of the creek. Slowly and gently, he lowered himself so that his head in his mouth until he was lying full length on the bed of the creek and close to the bank. The reed protruded for several inches above the surface, giving him a tube through which he could breathe. He was counting on the muddiness of the creek, and the green scum on its surface to hide him from his enemies.

Jim lay there for over an hour before he decided to risk sitting up to see what was happening. With only his face above the surface, he strained his eyes to the right, left and front in search of Indians. He saw none, but remained in the water, listening for the slightest sound that might indicate the approach of an enemy.

Above him the sky was crimson as the sun

sank, and Jim settled down to await the coming of darkness before making any move to climb out of the creek. When night came, the boy saw a ruddy glow coming from the direction of the village, where evidently a big fire had been started. Drums throbbed ominously through the night and shrill cries sounded through the forest.

Jim climbed out of the creek, taking care not to make a splash, and reclaimed his rifle. He crawled forward and peered into the village. The sound of drums had grown louder and hordes of savages were prancing about a large fire in the middle of the clearing.

The five torture stakes were revealed by the glow of the fire.

Moving with all the woodsmen's skill he had learned from Buck and Seth, he circled the village until he reached the rear of the hut which housed the muskets and ammunition. He cut a hole in the musky wall of the cabin and entered.

By the light coming from the fire outside, he found the five kegs of gunpowder which he and his friends had brought along, and the muskets and bullets. One by one, he pressed out the bungs. He spilled a generous amount of powder in a trail running right round the hut and returning to the middle, where he laid an opened keg. On top of the keg he placed all the muskets in the hut.

This done, he carried another keg through the hole he had made in the wall, spilling a trail of powder as he went, he took the keg to the rear of the next hut and left it there.

He returned to the first cabin, and repeated the process with another barrel of powder, leaving this one behind the next hut but one. He made two more journeys and placed the remaining kegs behind other huts. He had now five kegs of gunpowder positioned round the Iroquois village, and they were all linked up by a trail of powder.

He took out his waterproofed tinder-box and set fire to the powder train. When it was hissing towards the first keg, Jim grabbed the rifles, bullet pouches and powder-horns of his friends, and hurried from the hut.

He crawled as quickly as he could towards the rear of the building in which his friends were imprisoned. Four Indians were still on guard, standing one on each side of the cabin. Jim snaked as close as he dared to the sentry at the back of the hut. He was just in position when the first powder keg exploded with a thunderous roar. The hut housing the muskets and ammunition erupted flame and

The whispering weapons of the midnight marauder

Broken pieces of mud and of shattered glass showered on the sentries guarding the prison camp, and stared at the one of the sentries. A second shaking explosion blasted the sentries and more blazing thatched roofs of the village. Yelling and shouting, some of the Indians started into the woods. Others ran to the buildings which were threatened by fire and started to beat out the flames.

Three of the sentries fell in the fire-fighting. The forces and men were lost, for Jim came up behind the sentries and knocked him senseless with a hard-swung rifle butt.

Jim had left his friends' weapons and ammunition under a bush. Now he sprang to the rear window-opening of the prison hut and wriggled through it. As he dropped inside, a third explosion rocked the ground. Screams of pain and terror came from the panic-stricken savages.

"It's me—Jim," the youth announced to the dark figures tied up in the room.

"Good for yuh, son," exclaimed Buck Ford, holding out his wrists behind him while Jim sawed through the things binding them together.

In feverish haste, the youngster freed all four Rangers.

"I've got your guns and belts under a bush," he whispered. "Follow me."

Rubbing their wrists and stamping their numbed feet to restore their circulation, the Rangers moved stiffly after Jim. The fourth keg boomed across the village while the prisoners were wriggling through the window. Pandemonium reigned in the Iroquois village.

Fighting Retreat.

THE fugitives reached the place where Jim had left their weapons. The final keg blasted through the night as the Rangers gathered their rifles. Seth Grady was almost turning as he stepped on his belt with his own hands, and had a carving knife on his long-barreled rifle.

The Indians had forgotten their prisoners for the time being and Jim and the Rangers moved away from the village as fast as they could.

Presently, Seth Grady said to Jim:

"I had some hard thoughts about yuh, lad, when I thought yuh had highballed it without botherin' about us, an' I'm plumb ashamed of 'em now."

"Forget it," smiled the youngster. "I thought you'd all be following me when I made a dash for it. When I found you weren't with me, it was too late to turn back, so I hung around till I got a chance to help you get away."

They took to the swamps. Here the Rangers' woodcraft was not much use to them, for it was impossible to move through water that at times was thigh deep without making a noise. It was difficult to judge direction accurately, since the tall trees masked the way and prevented the Rangers from taking their bearings from the stars.

The little group travelled as fast as it could, but it was still in the swamps when the sun came. Buck took his bearings from the setting sun and growled disgustedly:

"We're travelling almost due east instead of south. No wonder we're still in these cursed swamps!"

They changed their course and set off at a killing pace. For two hours they sloshed through the seemingly endless marshes. They were wet, dirty, hungry and tired, but the Rangers' Buck kept urging them onwards.

After a time they came upon the long, camel-like path through the trees, along which they had come on their way to the Iroquois village. Sure now of the way, Buck led on. Seth, however, held up his hand to silence.

"There's Indians behind us," he declared.

Glancing over their shoulders, the party saw a score or more of the Iroquois rounding a bend.

"Get moving, and recharge your damp rifles as you go," snapped Buck.

Splashing on their way, the four men and the youth recharged their rifles as they went. Shriill whoops from behind them told that the Iroquois had caught sight of their quarry. Once their guns had been reloaded, the fugitives made better time, but they were tired from their all night journey and the Indians gained on them.

"We've gotta slow 'em up, Buck," declared Seth Grady, after a backward glance.

"They're coming up on us, hand over fist."

"O K," said the big Ranger. "We'll fight on the retreat. Spread out in line ahead with about fifty yards between yuh. Yuh go first, Jim. Then Zeke, Hank and Seth. I'll wait here an' pick off the first brave to come within range. After that I'll run past all of yuh and

tobacco to the other side of his mouth. Buck continued on his way until he was ahead of Jim. He halted, and reloaded his rifle.

Seth Grady's rifle cracked its challenge, and another Iroquois sank beneath the waters of the swamp. Zeke and Hank Clancy took their turns and each accounted for one of the foe.

Jim Fallon got ready for his shot. His heart was thumping with excitement. The whooping savages sloshed towards him. Jim took a deep breath and sighted at the painted chest of the foremost Indian. He held his fire to enable the Iroquois to get well within range; then he pulled the trigger.

His shoulder jerked to the recoil of the weapon. The brave continued to run forward, and Jim thought that he had missed. Then the Indian sank to his knees and toppled face downwards in the swamp.

Jim went past Buck Ford in awkward strides that set the water foaming and



As Jim Fallon slept, a hand came through the window of the hut and emptied a bag of snakes on to the boy's blankets.

reload. Yuh, Seth, will take the next shot and run until you're all of me again, and so on all down the line. That way we'll always have loaded guns waiting for the victims."

Jim ran ahead until he was about two hundred yards in front of Buck. Behind him came Zeke Clancy, who halted fifty yards before Jim. Hank stopped a similar distance behind his brother, and Seth fifty yards behind Hank.

Buck Ford took up a position behind a tree, and waited for the enemy to come into sight. The Iroquois rounded a clump of spruce trees. One brave was well ahead of his tribesmen.

Buck raised his deadly Long Tom rifle, squinted over its sights, and squeezed the trigger. The whip-crack report of the weapon echoed through the swamp. The over-ager savage was in the middle of a leaping stride when the Ranger fired. As the bullet tore through his heart, he twisted in mid-air and hit the water with a splash that showered the Indians behind him.

Buck turned on his heel. He splashed past Seth Grady, fifty yards farther on. The veteran nodded and shifted his chewing

swirling. He passed Seth, then Zeke and Hank, and took up his fighting position.

Presently Buck came bounding past him.

As he went by, the giant Ranger said:

"Start moving when I get in position. The Redskins aren't coming on so fast now. Seth and the Clancy boys will start moving at the same time."

When he was about fifty yards in front of Jim, Buck waved his mighty arm in a beckoning gesture, and continued forward at a walking pace. Jim repeated the gesture to Hank Clancy and himself started walking. The signal was relayed down the line and the cavalcade moved forward. At the rear, Seth Grady kept glancing behind to make sure that the savages were keeping their distance.

For about half a mile the Indians kept at a respectful range, but with the ceasing of the deadly rifle shots, they started to get bolder, and increased their pace. Turning quickly, Seth clapped his Long Tom to his shoulder and brought the nearest Iroquois down in the water. About-facing, Seth quickened his stride so that once more he overhauled his companions.

So far not one of the shots fired by the

fugitives had missed its mark. Such terribly accurate shooting was having its effect upon the Indians. Some of them began firing their muskets, but they plopped harmlessly into the water fully twenty yards behind Zeke Clawer, who was now the last man in the retreating line. The Iroquois' smooth-bored muskets had nothing like the range and accuracy of the woodsman's rifles.

The Redskins' enthusiasm for the chase waned, and they were still a long rifle shot away from the rear-most Ranger when Buck Ford reached dry land on the edge of the Sackem Marshes. The massive woodsman halted in thick timber and ordered the others to do the same as they came up with him.

"We'll wait here and give the varmints a volley," he declared, "I think that will send 'em home."

The five riflemen spread out in line abreast and waited. The Indians waded towards the edge of the swamp and seemed to be arguing among themselves. Buck let them get within easy range, and indicated to the Indians for each of his marksmen.

"Fire!" he said softly.

Five rifles spoke as one and five Iroquois went down before the singing lead. Buck had foretold, this was the last straw for the savages. They turned and beat a disorderly retreat.

"That's that," grunted Buck, with a sigh of relief. "We'll cover another ten miles and then look for a good place to camp."

Covering their tracks carefully, they pressed on until Buck decided that they had got far enough away from the Iroquois territory. Then they made camp for the night.

Return to Camp.

THE Rangers spent the next few days travelling hard, dodging French parties, and living on the ground they were able to get. Not actually tired, hungry and with their clothes torn and shabby, they arrived at Fort Edward.

Buck greeted them as a body of the cheer General Webb, who received them eagerly. Major Lionel Tristram, the commandant's side-de-camp, was with him and gaped with surprise at the bedraggled group.

"You are soon back, gentlemen," heamed General Webb. "I take it that your mission was successful?"

Buck ruefully shook his head.

"The French beat us to it, sir," he replied. As he related the expedition's adventures, Webb's frown deepened.

"I can only conclude that you or my men were careless with your talk before setting out," snapped the general, when Buck had finished. "Nobody except the people in this room knew about the expedition, so how could the French have got wind of it in time to forestall you?"

"You forget the guide, Lotonka," replied Buck, evenly. "He deserted us and led a band of Abenaki Indians who attacked us, and it was at your suggestion that we accepted him."

Webb turned irate eyes on Major Tristram. "How about it, Major?" he queried. "Lotonka was your choice."

"I don't understand it," said Tristram. "He has always trusted us as far as I was concerned. I can only suggest that Ford and his men showed prejudice against him and turned him against us."

Seth Grady gave a snort of disgust.

"That Injun was an Abenaki," he declared. "I knowed it as soon as I set eyes on him, an' no Abenaki can be trusted."

"It is possible, of course, that I was hoodwinked by the man," admitted Tristram, with a show of candour. "I'm not the first man to have been fooled by an Indian's cunning."

"How about the muskets and ammunition you took with you?" asked Webb.

Look at this, boys!

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"We lost them," replied Buck. "but the Indians didn't get them. Young Jim blew them sky-high when rescuing us from the village."

Webb gave Jim an approving glance. When he made a curl gesture of dismissal, Buck turned on his heel and left the room. His friends followed, but Major Tristram called back Jim Fallon.

"It strikes me that you're the only one who came out of this affair with credit, Fallon," commented the major. "Perhaps you can answer a question for me. How did you ever see a crescent-shaped scar on Ford's right forearm? If he has such a scar, it would be about two inches below his elbow."

Tristram's hard, black eyes focused on Jim's face as he asked the question. The youngster almost answered without thinking, for he had often seen such a scar on Buck's forearm. But seeing Tristram's keenness about his answer, Jim remembered just in time that the major suspected Buck Ford of being

Lieutenant Wainwright, late of the British Army.

Wainwright had absconded with the messunds of his regiment, and it was easy for Jim to deduce that Lieutenant Wainwright must have had the scar about which the major was asking. The fact that Buck bore a similar blemish on his forearm, confirmed Jim's own suspicions that the huge Ranger was the missing lieutenant, but Jim had no intention of telling Tristram that. For one thing, he liked Buck and did not like the major, and for another, the major strongly resembled "The Slink", the white leader of the Indians who had murdered Jim's family. Jim had seen The Slink without the buckskin mask the raider habitually wore. Buck had dismissed the idea that Tristram could possibly be the notorious Slink. But until the real Slink was caught and hanged, Jim would not be able to discuss his suspicions from his mind.

"I can't say I've noticed such a scar, Major Tristram. Why do you ask?" the lad replied cautiously.

"I still can't help thinking that Ford is thatascal Wainwright," replied the officer.

"I think you must have made a mistake, declared Jim.

"Perhaps," said the major. He turned towards General Webb and thereby signified that Jim was dismissed.

Leaving the office, the youngster strolled to the small room in the barracks which he shared with his four friends when they were in Fort Edward. Buck Ford, stripped to the waist, was washing off the fifth gathered on the journey to and from the Sackem marshes.

Glancing at Buck's right forearm, Jim saw a white, crescent-shaped scar on it in the exact place described by Tristram. Jim had known it was there, but seeing it again in the light of his new knowledge, made him realise more fully that the man whom he so much admired had betrayed the trust placed in him by his fellow officers.

Jim longed to talk the matter over with Buck, but he did not dare to do so, because in doing so he would be in the colonies asked questions about a third party.

When Jim went to bed in his blistered cot that night, he was still thinking about Buck, and slept only in fits and starts. Each time he awakened, he found himself thinking of Buck's disgrace and of his own suspicions regarding Major Tristram.

He awakened for the third time when he felt a soft blow on his legs. He realised that an object had been dropped on him through the window. He stifened with shock as the thing on his legs writhed, and an angry hissing sounded through the darkness.

Jim gasped as he realised that the wriggling and hissing things on his legs were snakes. Judging by the noise they were making, there must have been half a dozen or more. Grabbing the top edge of his blanket, Jim flung it towards his feet, so that its folds would cover the reptiles. He leapt from the bedding. In his haste, he tripped over Seth Grady.

"Get up, everybody," yelled Jim. "There are snakes in the room!"

There was a stirring in the blackness, and Jim repeated his warning while backing away from the danger area.

"Keep still," came Buck's calm voice. "Get on snakes with your bare feet and you'll be bitten for sure."

Jim forced himself to obey.

He heard the padding of bare feet on the board floor. Then, from somewhere behind him, Buck spoke again.

"Come over here, everybody, and be quick about it."

How can the Rangers avoid the menace of the snakes? Order NEXT THURSDAY'S "Hotspur" and you can find out.